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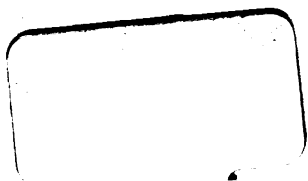
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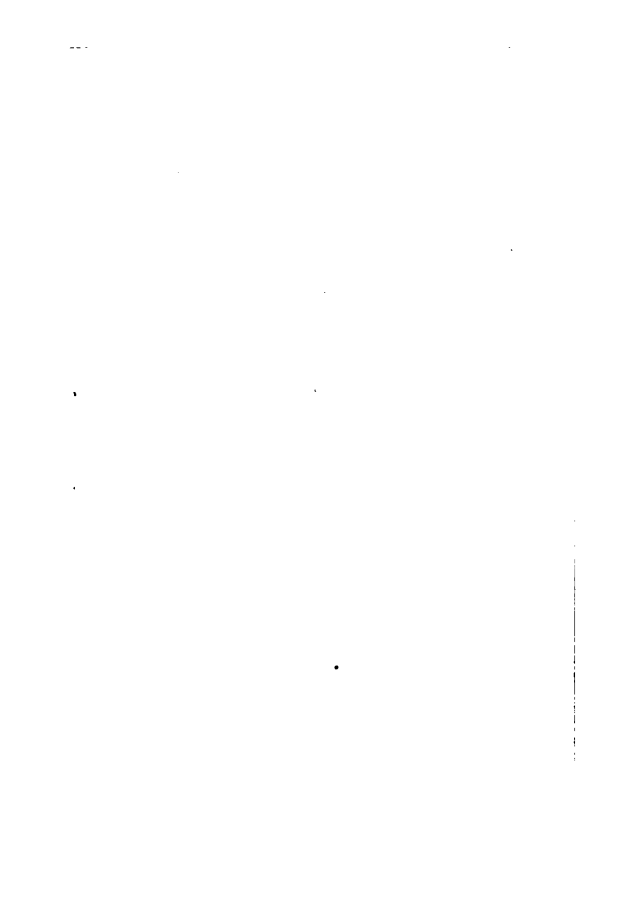
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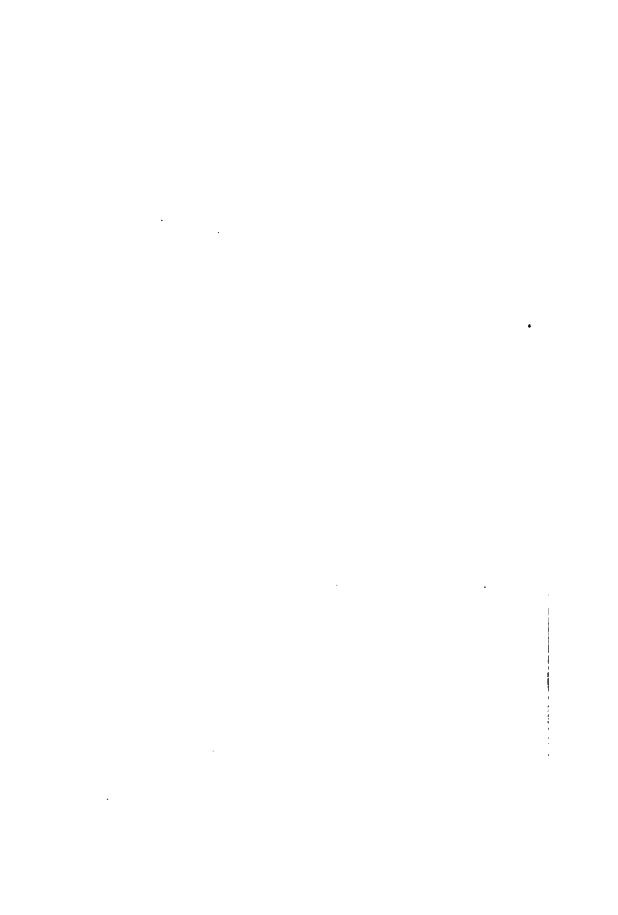
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PARLIAMENTARY  
SPEECHES

*Richard B. Sheridan*  
R. B. SHERIDAN.



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# SHERIDAN'S

SELECT

## PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES.

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### CELEBRATED SPEECH

ON

### THE PROCEEDINGS AGAINST MR. HASTINGS.

FEBRUARY 7, 1787.

The house having resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, Mr. St. John in the chair, on the fourth charge against Mr. Hastings, viz. the resumption of the Jaghires, and the confiscation of the treasures of the princesses of Oude.

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Mr SHERIDAN commenced by observing that, had it been possible to have received, without a violation of the established rules of parliament, the paper (1) which the honorable member,

(1) A paper from Sir Elijah Impey, amending his evidence.

Mr Dempster, had just now read, he should willingly have receded from any forms of the house, for the purpose of obtaining new lights and farther illustrations on the important subject then before them; not, indeed, that, on the present occasion, he found himself so ill prepared, as merely, for this reason, to be prevented from proceeding to the discharge of his duty; neither, to speak freely, was he inclined to consider any explanatory additions to the evidence of Sir Elijah Impey so much framed to elucidate, as to perplex and contradict. Needless to his present purpose was it for him to require Sir Elijah, *legally*, to recognize what had been read, in *his* name, by the honorable gentleman. In fact, neither the informality of any subsisting evidence, nor the adducement of any new explanations from Sir Elijah Impey, could make the slightest impression upon the vast and strong body of proof which he should now bring forward against Warren Hastings. Yet, if any motive could have so far operated upon him, as to make him industriously seek for renewed opportunities of questioning Sir Elijah, it would result from his fresh and indignant recollection of the low and artful stratagem of delivering to the members, and others, in this last period of parliamentary inquiry, printed hand-bills of de-

fence, the contents of which bespoke a presumptuous and empty boast of completely refuting all which, at any time, *had*, or even *could* be advanced against Mr Hastings, on the subject of the fourth article in the general charge of a right honorable member (Mr Burke). But even this was far beneath his notice. The rectitude and strength of his cause were not to be prejudiced by such pitiful expedients; and he should not waste a moment in counteracting measures, which, though insidious, were proportionately frivolous and unavailing. Nor would he take up the time of the committee with any general arguments to prove, that the subject of the charge, which had fallen to his lot to bring forward, was of great moment and magnitude. The attention which parliament had paid to the affairs of India, for many sessions past, the voluminous productions of their committees on that subject, the various proceedings in that house respecting it, their own strong and pointed resolutions, the repeated recommendation of His Majesty, and their reiterated assurances of paying due regard to those recommendations, as well as various acts of the legislature, were all of them undeniable proofs of the moment and magnitude of the consideration; and incontrovertibly established this plain, broad fact, that parliament di-

rectly acknowledged that the British name and character had been dishonored, and rendered detested throughout India, by the malversation and crimes of the principal servant of the East India Company. That fact having been established beyond all question, by themselves, and by their own acts, there needed no argument, on his part, to induce the committee to see the importance of the subject about to be discussed that day, in a more striking point of view than they themselves had held it up to public observation. There were, he knew, persons without doors who affected to ridicule the idea of prosecuting Mr Hastings; and who not inconsistently redoubled their exertions, in proportion as the prosecution became more serious, to increase their sarcasms upon the subject, by asserting that parliament might be more usefully employed; that there were matters of more immediate moment to engage their attention; that a commercial treaty with France had just been concluded; that it was an object of a vast and comprehensive nature, and in itself sufficient to engross their attention. To all this he would oppose these questions. Was parliament mis-spending its time, by enquiring into the oppressions practised on millions of unfortunate persons in India, and endeavoring to bring the daring delinquent,

who had been guilty of the most flagrant acts of enormous tyranny and rapacious speculation, to exemplary and condign punishment? Was it a misuse of their functions to be diligent in attempting, by the most effectual means, to wipe off the disgrace affixed to the British name in India, and to rescue the national character from lasting infamy? Surely no man who felt for either the one or the other would think a business of greater moment, or magnitude, could occupy his attention; or that the house could, with too much steadiness, too ardent a zeal, or too industrious a perseverance, pursue its object. Their conduct in this respect, during the course of the preceding year, had done them immortal honour, and proved to all the world, that however degenerate an example of Englishmen some of the British subjects had exhibited in India, the people of England collectively, speaking and acting by their representatives, felt, as men *should* feel on such an occasion, that they were anxious to do justice, by redressing injuries, and punishing offenders, however high their rank, however elevated their station.

Their indefatigable exertions in committees appointed to enquire concerning the affairs of India; their numerous, elaborate, and clear reports; their long and interesting debates; their

solemn addresses to the throne ; their rigorous legislative acts ; their marked detestation of that novel and base sophism in the principles of judicial enquiry ( constantly the language of the Governor-General's *servile dependents!* ), that crimes might be compounded ; that the guilt of Mr Hastings was to be balanced by his successes ; that fortunate events were a full and complete set-off against a system of oppression , corruption , breach of faith , speculation , and treachery ; and , finally , their solemn and awful judgment that , in the case of Benares , Mr Hastings's conduct was a proper object of parliamentary impeachment ; had covered them with applause , and brought them forward in the face of all the world as the objects of perpetual admiration . Not less unquestionably just , than highly virtuous , was the assertion of the commons of Great Britain , that there were acts which no political necessity could warrant ; and that amidst flagrancies of such an inexpiable description , was the treatment of *Cheit Sing* . To use the well-founded and emphatic language of a right honorable gentleman ( Mr Pitt ) , the committee had discovered in the administration of Mr Hastings , proceedings of strong injustice , of grinding oppression , and unprovoked severity . In this decision the committee had , also , vindicated

the character of his right honorable friend (Mr Burke), from the slanderous tongue of ignorance and perversion. They had, by their vote on that question, declared, that the man who brought the charges was no false accuser; that he was not moved by envy, by malice, nor by any unworthy motives to blacken a spotless name, but that he was the indefatigable, persevering, and, at length, successful champion of oppressed multitudes, against their tyrannical oppressor. With sound justice, with manly firmness, with unshaken integrity, had his right honorable friend, upon all occasions, resisted the timid policy of mere remedial acts — even the high opinion of Mr Hastings's successor; even the admitted worth of Lord Cornwallis's character, had been deemed by his right honorable friend, an inadequate atonement to India for the injuries so heavily inflicted on that devoted country. Animated with the same zeal, the committee had, by that memorable vote, given a solemn pledge of their farther intentions. They had audibly said to India — you shall no longer be seduced into temporary acquiescence, by sending out a titled Governor, or a set of vapouring resolutions. — It is not with stars, and ribands, and all the badges of regal favor, that we atone to you for past delinquencies. No — you

shall have the solid consolation of seeing an end to your grievances, by an example of punishment for those that have already taken place. The house has set up a beacon, which, whilst it served to guide their own way, would also make their motions more conspicuous to the world which surrounded and beheld them. He had no doubt but in their manly determination, to go through the whole of the business with the same steadiness which gave such sterling brilliancy of character to their outset, they might challenge the world to observe and judge of them by the result. Impossible was it for such men to become improperly influenced by a paper, bearing the signature of Warren Hastings, and put, not many minutes before into *their* hand, as well as his own, on their entrance into the house. The insidious paper he felt himself at liberty to consider as a second defense, and a second answer to the charge he was about to bring forward; a charge replete with proof of criminality of the blackest dye, — of tyranny the most vile and premeditated, — of corruption the most open and shameless, — of oppression the most severe and grinding, of cruelty the most hard and unparalleled. But he was far from meaning to rest the charge on assertion, or on any warm expressions which the impulse of wounded feel-



ings might produce. He would establish every part of the charge, by the most unanswerable proof, and the most unquestionable evidence; and the witness whom he would bring forth to support every fact which he would state, should be, for the most part, one whom no man would venture to contradict — Warren Hastings himself. Yet, *this* character had friends, nor were they blameable. They might believe him guiltless, because he asserted his integrity. Even the partial warmth of friendship, and the emotions of a good, admiring, and unsuspecting heart, might not only carry them to such lengths, but incite them to rise with an intrepid confidence in his vindication. Again (Mr Sheridan added), would he repeat that the vote of the last session, wherein the conduct of this pillar of India, this corner-stone of our strength in the East, this talisman of the British territories in Asia, was censured, did the greatest honor to this house, as it must be the fore-runner of speedy justice on *that character*, which was said to be above censure, and whose conduct we were given to understand was not within the reach even of suspicion; but whose deeds were indeed such as no difficulties, no necessity could justify; for where is the situation, however elevated, and in that elevation

however embarrassed, that can authorize the wilful commission of oppression and rapacity. If, at any period a point arose, on which enquiry had been full, deliberate, and dispassionate, it was the present. There were questions on which party conviction was supposed to be a matter of easy acquisition; and if this enquiry was to be considered merely as a matter of party, he should regard it as very trifling indeed; but he professed to God, that he felt in his own bosom the strongest personal conviction; and he was sensible that many other gentlemen did the same. It was on that conviction that he believed the conduct of Mr Hastings, in regard to the Nabob of Oude and the Begums, comprehended every species of human offence. — He had proved himself guilty of rapacity at once violent and insatiable — of treachery, cool and premeditated — of oppression, useless and unprovoked — of breach of faith, unwarrantable and base — of cruelty, unmanly and unmerciful. — These were the crimes of which, in his soul and conscience, he arraigned Warren Hastings; and of which he had the confidence to say he should convict him. As there were gentlemen ready to stand up his advocates, he challenged them to watch him — to watch if he advanced one inch of assertion for which he had

not solid ground ; for he trusted nothing to declamation. — He desired credit for no fact which he did not prove, and which he did not indeed demonstrate beyond the possibility of refutation. He should not desert the clear and invincible ground of truth, throughout any one particle of his allegations *against* Mr Hastings, who uniformly aimed to govern India by his own arbitrary power, covering with misery upon misery a wretched people, whom providence had subjected to the dominion of this country ; whilst in the *defence* of Mr Hastings, not one single circumstance grounded upon truth was stated. — He would repeat the words, and gentlemen might take them down ; — the attempt at vindication was false throughout. Mr Sheridan now pursuing the *examination* of Mr Hastings's defence, observed — that there could not exist a single plea of maintaining that that defence against the particular charge now before the committee was hasty. Mr Hastings had had sufficient time to make it up ; and the committee saw that he had thought fit to go back as far as the year 1775, for pretended ground of justification, from the charge of violence and rapacity, Mr Sheridan here read a variety of extracts from the defence, which stated the various steps taken by Mr Bristow, in the years 1775 and 1776, to procure

from the Begums aid to the Nabob. Not one of these facts, as stated by Mr Hastings, was true. Groundless, nugatory and insulting were the affirmations of Mr Hastings, that the seizure of treasures from the Begums, and the exposition of their pilfered goods to public auction (unparalleled acts of open injustice, oppression, and inhumanity!) were in any degree to be defended by those encroachments on their property, which had taken place *previous* to *his* administration, or by those sales which they themselves had solicited as a favorable mode of supplying a part of their aid to the Nabob. The relation of a series of plain, indisputable facts would irrecoverably overthrow a subterfuge so pitiful, — a distinction so ridiculous! It must be remembered, that, at that period, the Begums did not *merely desire*, but they *most expressly stipulated*, that of the thirty lacks promised, eleven should be paid in sundry articles of manufacture. Was it not obvious, therefore, that the sales of goods, in the first case, far from partaking of the nature of an act of plunder, became an extension of relief, of indulgence, and of accommodation? But, however, he would not be content, like Mr Hastings, with barely making assertions, or, when made against his statement, with barely denying them; on the

contrary, whenever he objected to a single statement, he would bring his refutation, and almost in every instance Mr Hastings himself should be his witness. By the passages which he should beg leave to read, Mr Hastings wished to insinuate, that a claim was set up, in the year 1775, to the treasure of the 'Begums, as belonging of right to the Nabob. Mr Sheridan, from a variety of documents, chiefly from the minutes of the supreme council, of which Mr Hastings had been the president, explained the true state of that question. Treasure, which was the source of all the cruelties, was the original pretence which Mr Hastings had made to the Company for the proceeding; and through the whole of his conduct he had alleged the principles of Mahomedanism in mitigation of the severities he had sanctioned; as if he meant to insinuate that there was something in Mahomedanism which rendered it impious in a son not to plunder his mother. But to shew how the case precisely stood when Mr Hastings began the attacks, Mr Sheridan read the minutes of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, and Mr Francis, who severally spoke of a claim which had been made by the Nabob on the Bhow Begum, in the year 1775, amounting to two one-half lacks. The opinion contained in

those minutes was, that women were, on the death of their husbands, entitled by the Mahomedan law only to the property within the Zenana where they lived. This opinion was decisive — Mr Bristow used no threats — no military execution or rigor were even menaced; the Begums complied with the requisition then made, and the disputed property then claimed was given up. After this, the farther treasure, namely, that which was within the Zenana, was confessedly her own — No fresh right was set up — no pretence was made of any kind to the residue — nay, a treaty was signed by the Nabob, and ratified by the resident, Mr Bristow, that, on her paying thirty lacks, she should be freed from all farther application; and the Company were bound, by Mr Bristow, to guarantee this treaty. Here then was the issue. After this treaty thus ratified, could there be an argument as to the right of the treasure of the Begums? And if the Mahomedan law had ever given a right, was not that right then concluded? To prove, however, the reliance which the Princesses of Oude had entertained, even in the year 1775, of receiving protection and support from the British government; an expectation so fatally disappointed in latter times, Mr Sheridan read an extract of a letter from the Begum,

the mother of the Nabob, to Mr Hastings, received at Calcutta December 22, 1775, wherein she says, « If it is *your pleasure* that the mother of the late Nabob, myself, and his other women, and infant children, should be reduced to a state of dishonor and distress, we *must submit*; but if, on the contrary, you call to mind the friendship of the late blessed Nabob, you will exert yourself effectually in favor of us, who are helpless. » And, again, « If you do not approve of my remaining at Fyzabad, send a person here in your name, to remove the mother of the late Nabob, myself, and about 2000 other women and children, that we may reside with honor and reputation in some other place. » Mr Sheridan, in a regular progression of evidence, proceeded to state the successive periods, and finally to bring down the immediate subject in question to the day in which Mr Hastings embraced the project of plundering the Begums; and, to justify which, he had exhibited in his defence four charges against them, as the grounds and motives of his own conduct.

1. That they had given disturbance at all times to the government of the Nabob, and that they had long manifested a spirit hostile to his and to the English government.

2. That they excited the Zemindars to revolt,

at the time of the insurrection at Benares, and of the resumption of the Jaghires.

3. That they resisted by armed force the resumption of their own Jaghires; and,

4. That they excited, and were accessory to, the insurrection at Benares.

To each of these charges, Mr Sheridan gave distinct and separate answers. First, on the subject of the imputed disturbances which they were falsely said to have occasioned, he could produce a variety of extracts, many of them written by Mr Hastings himself, to prove that on the contrary they had particularly distinguished themselves by their friendship for the English, and the various good offices which they had rendered the government.

Mr Hastings (Mr Sheridan observed,) left Calcutta in 1781, and proceeded to Lucknow, as he said himself, with two great objects in his mind; namely, Benares and Oude. What was the nature of these boasted resources? — that he should plunder one, or both, — the equitable alternative of a highwayman, who in going forth in the evening, hesitates which of his resources to prefer — Bagshot, or Hounslow. In such a state of generous irresolution, did Mr Hastings proceed to Benares and Oude. At Benares he failed, in his pecuniary object. Then,



and not till then — not on account of any ancient enmities shown by the Begums — not in resentment of any old disturbances, but because he had failed in one place, and had but two in his prospect, did he conceive the base expedient of plundering these aged women. He had no pretence — he had no excuse — he had nothing but the arrogant and obstinate determination to govern India by his own corrupt will to plead for his conduct. Inflamed by disappointment in his first project, he hastened to the fortress of Chunar, to meditate the more atrocious design of instigating a son against his mother, of sacrificing female dignity and distress to parricide and plunder. At Chunar was that infamous treaty concerted with the Nabob Vizier, to despoil the princesses of Oude of their hereditary possessions; — there it was that Mr Hastings had stipulated with one, whom he called an *independent prince*, „ that as great distress has arisen to the nabob's government from the military power and dominion assumed by the Jaghiedars, he be *permitted* to resume such as he may find necessary; with a reserve, that all such, for the amount of whose Jaghiers the company are guarantees, shall, in case of the resumption of their lands, be paid the amount of their net collections, through the resident in ready mo-

ney ; — and that no English resident be appointed to Furruckabad. »

No sooner was this foundation of iniquity thus instantly established, in violation of the pledged faith and solemn guarantee of the British government ; no sooner had Mr Hastings determined to invade the substance of justice, than he resolved to avail himself of her judicial forms ; and accordingly dispatched a messenger from the chief justice of India, to assist him in perpetrating the violations he had projected. Sir Elijah having arrived, Mr Hastings, with much art, proposed a question of opinion, involving an unsubstantiated fact, in order to obtain even a surreptitious approbation of the measure he had predetermined to adopt. « The Begums being in actual rebellion, might not the nabob confiscate their property ? » « Most undoubtedly, » was the ready answer of the friendly judge. Not a syllable of inquiry intervened, as to the existence of the imputed rebellion ; nor a moment's pause as to the ill purposes to which the decision of a chief justice might be perverted. It was not the office of a friend to mix the grave caution and cold circumspection of a judge, with an opinion taken in such circumstances ; and Sir Elijah had previously declared, that he gave his advice not as a judge, but as a

friend; a character he equally preferred, in the strange office which he undertook, of collecting defensive affidavits on the subject of Benares.

Mr Sheridan said, it was curious to reflect on the whole of Sir Elijah's circuit at that perilous time. Sir Elijah had stated his desire of relaxing from the fatigues of office, and unbending his mind in a party of health and pleasure: yet wisely apprehending that very sudden relaxation might defeat its object, he had contrived to mix some matters of business, to be interspersed with his amusements. He had, therefore, in his little airing of nine hundred miles, great part of which he went post, escorted by an army, selected those very situations where insurrection subsisted, and rebellion was threatened; and had not only delivered his deep and curious researches into the laws and rights of nations and of treaties, in the capacity of the Oriental Grotius, whom Warren Hastings was to study; but likewise in the humbler and more practical situation of a collector of *ex parte* evidence. In the former quality, his opinion was the pre-mature sanction for plundering the Begums; — in the latter character, he became the post-humous supporter of the expulsion and pillage of the Rajah Cheit Sing. Acting on an unproved fact, on a position as a datum of the Duke of

Richmond's fabrication, he had not hesitated, in the first instance, to lend his authority as a license for unlimited persecution. In the latter, he did not disdain to scud about India, like an itinerant informer, with a pedlar's pack of garbled evidence and surreptitious affidavits. What pure friendship, what a voucher of unequivocal attachment from a British Judge to such a character as Warren Hastings! With a generous oblivion of duty and of honor; with a proud sense of having authorized all future rapacity, and sanctioned all past oppression, this friendly judge proceeded on his circuit of health and ease; and whilst the Governor-General, sanctioned by this solemn opinion, issued his orders to plunder the Begums of their treasure, Sir Elijah pursued his progress; and passing through a wide region of distress and misery explored a country that presented a speaking picture of hunger and of nakedness, in quest of objects best suited to his feelings, in anxious search of calamities most kindred to his invalid imagination.

Thus whilst the executive power in India was perverted to the most disgraceful inhumanities, the judicial authority also became its close and confidential associate — at the same moment that the sword of government was turned to an assassin's dagger, the pure ermine of justice was

stained and soiled with the basest and meanest contamination. Under such circumstance did Mr Hastings complete the treaty of Chunar ; — a treaty which might challenge all the treaties that ever subsisted, for containing in the smallest compass the most extensive treachery. Mr Hastings did not conclude that treaty, till he had received from the Nabob a present, or rather a bribe, of 100,000 *l*.

The circumstances of this present were as extraordinary as the thing itself. Four months afterwards, and not till then, Mr Hastings communicated the matter to the company. Unfortunately for himself, however, this tardy disclosure was conveyed in words which betrayed his original meaning; for, with no common incaution, he admits the present *« was of a magnitude not to be concealed. »* Mr Sheridan stated all the circumstances of this bribe; and averred that the whole had its rise in a principle of rank corruption. For what was the consideration for this extraordinary bribe? No less than the withdrawing from Oude not only all the English gentlemen in official situations, but the whole also of the English army; and that too at the very moment when he himself had stated the whole country of Oude to be in open revolt and rebellion. Other very strange articles were con-

tained in the same treaty, which nothing but this infamous bribe could have occasioned, together with the reserve which he had in his own mind of treachery to the Nabob; for the only part of the treaty which he ever attempted to carry into execution was to withdraw the English gentlemen from Oude. The Nabob, indeed, considered this as essential to his deliverance; and his observation on the circumstance was curious: — for though Major Palmer, said he, has not yet asked any thing, I observe it is the custom of the English gentlemen constantly to ask for something from me before they go. This imputation on the English Mr Hastings was most ready, most rejoiced, to countenance as a screen and shelter for his own abandoned profligacy; and therefore, at the very moment that he pocketed the extorted spoils of the Nabob, with his usual grave hypocrisy and cant, “Go,” he said, to the English gentlemen, “go, you oppressive rascals, go from this worthy unhappy man, whom *you* have plundered, and leave him to *my* protection. You have robbed him — you have plundered him — you have taken advantage of his accumulated distresses; but, please God, he shall in future be at rest; for I have promised him he shall never see the face of an Englishman again.” This, however, was the only part

of the treaty which he even affected to fulfil ; and, in all its other parts , we learn from himself , that at the very moment he made it , he intended to deceive the Nabob ; and accordingly he advised *general* instead of *partial* resumption, for the express purpose of defeating the first views of the Nabob ; and , instead of giving instant and unqualified assent to all the articles of the treaty ; he perpetually qualified , explained, and varied them with new diminutions and reservations. Mr Sheridan called upon gentlemen to say , if there was any theory in Machiavel , any treachery upon record, if they had ever heard of any cold Italian fraud which could in any degree be put in comparison with the disgusting hypocrisy, and unequalled baseness which Mr Hastings had shewn on that occasion.

After having stated this complicated infamy in terms of the severest reprehension , Mr Sheridan proceeded to observe , that he recollected to have heard it advanced by some of those admirers of Mr Hastings , who were not so implicit as to give unqualified applause to his crimes, that they found an apology for the atrocity of them , in the greatness of his mind. To estimate the solidity of such a defence, it would be sufficient merely to consider in what consisted this prepossessing distinction , this captivat-

ing characteristic of greatness of mind. Is it not solely to be traced in great actions directed to great ends? In them, and them alone, we are to search for true estimable magnanimity. To them only can we justly affix the splendid title and honors of real greatness. There was indeed another species of greatness, which displayed itself in boldly conceiving a bad measure, and undauntedly pursuing it to its accomplishment. But had Mr Hastings the merit of exhibiting either of these descriptions of greatness; — even of the latter? He saw nothing great — nothing magnanimous — nothing open — nothing direct in his measures, or in his mind; — on the contrary, he had too often pursued the worst objects by the worst means. His course was an eternal deviation from rectitude. He either tyrannised or deceived; and was by turns a Dionysius and a Scapin. As well might the writhing obliquity of the serpent be compared to the swift directness of the arrow, as the duplicity of Mr Hastings's ambition to the simple steadiness of genuine magnanimity. In his mind all was shuffling, ambiguous, dark, insidious, and little: nothing simple, nothing unmixed: all affected plainness, and actual dissimulation; — a heterogeneous mass of contradictory qualities; with nothing great but his



crimes ; and even those contrasted by the littleness of his motives , which at once denoted both his baseness and his meanness , and marked him for a traitor and a trickster. Nay , in his stile and writing , there was the same mixture of vicious contrarieties ; — the most groveling ideas were conveyed in the most inflated language ; giving mock consequence to low cavils , and uttering quibbles in heroics ; so that his compositions disgusted the mind's taste , as much as his actions excited the soul's abhorrence. Indeed this mixture of character seemed by some unaccountable , but inherent quality , to be appropriated , though in inferior degrees , to every thing that concerned his employers. He remembered to have heard an honorable and learned gentleman ( Mr Dundas ) remark , that there was something in the first frame and constitution of the company , which extended the sordid principles of their origin over all their successive operations ; connecting with their civil policy , and even with their boldest achievements , the meanness of a pedlar , and the profligacy of pirates. Alike in the political and the military line could be observed *auctioneering ambassadors* and *trading generals* ; — and thus we saw a revolution brought about by *affidavits* ; an army employed in *executing an arrest* ; a town besie-

ged on a *note of hand*; a prince dethroned for the *balance of an account*. Thus it was they exhibited a government, which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre, and the bittle *traffic of a merchant's counting-house*, wielding a truncheon with one hand, and *picking a pocket with the other*. Mr Sheridan now went into a long statement to shew the various irrefragable proofs exhibited in the minutes of the Bengal council, of the falsity of the charge, viz. That the Begums were the ancient disturbers of the government. And equally to prove that the second charge also (namely, that the Begums had incited the Jaghiredars to resist the Nabob) was no less untrue; it being substantiated in evidence that not one of the Jaghiredars *did* resist.

Mr Sheridan maintained that it was incontrovertible that the Begums were not concerned either in the rebellion of Bulbudder, or the insurrection at Benares; nor did Mr Hastings ever once *seriously* believe them guilty. Their *treasures* were their *treasons*, and Asoph ul Dowlah thought like an unwise prince, when he blamed his father for leaving him so little wealth. His father, Shulah ul Dowlah, acted wisely in leaving his son with no temptation about him, to invite acts of violence from the rapacious. He cloathed him with poverty as with a shield,

and armed him with necessity as with a sword.

The third charge was equally false: Did they resist the resumption of their own Jaghiredars? Though if they *had* resisted, he contended that there would have been no crime; for those Jaghiredars were by solemn treaty confirmed to them; but, on the contrary, there was not one syllable of charge against them. The Nabob himself, with all the load of obloquy which he incurred, never imputed to them the crime of stirring up an opposition to his authority.

To prove the falsehood of the whole of this charge and to shew that Mr Hastings originally projected the plunder; that he threw the odium, in the first instance, on the Nabob; that he imputed the crimes to them before he had received one of the rumours which he afterwards manufactured into affidavits, Mr Sheridan recommended a particular attention to dates; and he deduced from the papers these facts: — that the first idea was started by Mr Hastings on the 15th of November, 1781; that Mr Middleton communicated it to the Nabob, and procured from him a formal proposition on the 2d of December; that on the 1st of December Mr Hastings wrote a letter to Mr Middleton, confirming the first suggestion made through Sir Elijah, which letter came into the hands of Mr Middle-

ton on the 6th of December. He stated all the circumstances of the pains taken by Mr Middleton to bring the Nabob at length to issue with the Perwannas, and coupled this with the extraordinary minute written by Mr Hastings on his return to Calcutta, where he stated the resistance of the Begums to the execution of the resumption on the 7th of January, 1782 as the cause of the measure in November 1781. Mr Sheridan then proceeded to prove, that the Begums were, by their condition, their age, and their infirmities, almost the only souls in India who could not have a thought of distressing that government, by which alone they could hope to be protected; and that to charge them with a design to depose their nearest and dearest relation, was equally absurd. He did not endeavour to do this from any idea, that because there was no motive for the offences imputed to these women, it was therefore a necessary consequence that such imputations were false. He was not to learn that there was such a crime as wanton, unprovoked wickedness. Those who entertained doubts on this point need only give themselves the trouble of reading the administration of Mr Hastings. But, as to the immediate case, the documents on the table would bear incontrovertible testimony that insurrections had

constantly taken place in Oude. To ascribe it to the Begums was wandering even beyond the improbabilities of fiction. It were not less absurd to affirm, that famine would not have pinched, nor thirst have parched, nor extermination have depopulated — but for the interference of these old women. To use a strong expression of Mr Hastings on another occasion, « The good which those women did was certain — the ill was precarious. » But Mr Hastings had found it more suitable to his purposes to reverse the proposition; yet wanting a motive for his rapacity, he could find it only in fiction. The simple fact was, their treasure was their treason. But « they complained of the injustice. » God of Heaven, had they not a right to complain! After a solemn treaty violated; — plundered of all their property, and on the eve of the last extremity of wretchedness, were they to be deprived of the last resource of impotent wretchedness — complaint and lamentation! Was it a crime that they should crowd together in fluttering trepidation like a flock of resistless birds on seeing the felon kite, who, having darted at one devoted bird, and missed his aim, singled out a new object, and was springing on his prey with redoubled vigor in his wing, and keener vengeance in his eye. The fact with Mr Hastings was pre-

cisely this : — Having failed in the case of Cheit Sing, he saw his fate ; he felt the necessity of procuring a sum of money somewhere, for he knew that to be the never-failing receipt to make his peace with the directors at home. Such, Mr Sheridan added, were the true substantial motives of the horrid excesses perpetrated against the Begums! — excesses, in every part of the description of which, he felt himself accompanied by the vigorous support of the most unanswerable evidence ; and upon *this* test would he place his whole cause. Let gentlemen lay their hands upon their hearts, and with truth issuing in all its purity from their lips, solemnly declare whether they *were* or *were not* convinced that the *real* spring of the conduct of Mr Hastings, far from being a desire to crush a rebellion (an ideal, fabulous rebellion!) was a malignantly rapacious determination to seize, with lawless hands, upon the treasures of devoted, miserable, yet unoffending victims.

Mr Sheridan now adverted to the affidavit made by Mr Middleton; and after stating how futile were the grounds upon which he had, to the satisfaction of his conscience, proceeded to the utmost extremity of violence against the Begums ; he exclaimed, the God of Justice forbid that any man in this house should make up his

mind to *accuse* Mr Hastings on the ground which Mr Middleton took for *condemning* the Begums; or to pass a verdict of guilty for the most trivial misdemeanor against the poorest wretch that ever had existed. He then revised and animadverted on the affidavits of Colonel Hannay, Colonel Gordon, Major M'Donald, Major Williams, and others. Major Williams, among the strange reports that chiefly filled these affidavits, stated one that *he* had heard — namely, that 50 British troops, watching 200 prisoners, had been surrounded by 6000 of the enemy, and relieved by the approach of *nine* men. And of such extraordinary hearsay-evidence were most of the depositions composed. Considering, therefore the character given by Mr Hastings of the British army in Oude, “that they manifested a rage for rapacity and peculation,” it was extraordinary that there were no instances of stouter swearing. But as for Colonel Gordon, he afforded a flagrantly conspicuous ‘proof of the *grateful spirit and temper* of affidavits designed to plunge these wretched women in irretrievable ruin. Colonel Gordon was just before, *not merely released from danger*, but *preserved from imminent death* by the very person whose accuser he thought fit to become : and yet *incredible* as it may appear, even at the

expiration of two little days from his deliverance, he deposes against the distressed and unfortunate woman who had become his *saviour*, and *only upon hearsay evidence* accuses her of crimes and rebellion. Great God of Justice ! ( exclaimed Mr Sheridan ) canst thou from thy eternal throne look down upon such premeditated turpitude of heart, and not fix some mark of dreadful vengeance upon the perpetrators ? — Of Mr M'Donald, he said, that he liked not the memcry which remembered things better at the end of five years than at the time, unless there might be something so relaxing in the climate of India, and so affecting the memory as well as the nerves, « the soft figures melting away, » and the images of immediate action instantaneously dissolving, men must return to their native air of England, to brace up the mind as well as the body, and have their memories, like their sinews, restrung.

Having painted the loose quality of the affidavits, he said, that he must pause a moment, and particularly address himself to one description of gentlemen, those of the learned profession, within those walls. They saw that that house was the path to fortune in their profession : that they might soon expect that some of them were to be called to a dignified situation, where the



great and important trust would be reposed in them of protecting the lives and fortunes of their fellow-subjects. One right honorable and learned gentleman, in particular ( Sir Lloyd Kenyon ) if rumour spoke right, might suddenly be called to succeed that great and venerable character , who long had shone the brightest luminary of his profession, whose pure and steady light was clear even to its latest moment, but whose last beam must now too soon be extinguished. That he would ask the supposed successor of Lord Mansfield, to calmly reflect on these extraordinary depositions, and solemnly to declare, whether the mass of affidavits taken at Lucknow would be received by him as evidence to convict the lowest subject in this country? If he said it would, he declared to God he would sit down, and not add a syllable more to the too long trespass which he had made on the patience of the committee.

Mr Sheridan went farther into the exposure of the evidence, into the comparison of dates, and the subsequent circumstances, in order to prove that all the enormous consequence which followed from the resumption, in the captivity of the women, and the imprisonment and cruelties practised on their people, were solely to be ascribed and to be imputed to Mr Hastings. Aft-

er stating the miseries which the women suffered, he said that Mr Hastings had once remarked, that a mind touched with superstition might have contemplated the fate of the Rohillas with peculiar impressions. But if indeed the mind of Mr Hastings could yield to superstitious imagination; if his fancy could suffer any disturbance, and even in vision, image forth the proud spirit of Sujah Dowlah, looking down upon the ruin and devastation of his family, and beholding that palace which Mr Hastings had first wrested from his hand, and afterwards restored, plundered by that very army with which he himself had vanquished the Mahrattas; seizing on the very plunder which he had ravaged from the Rohillas; that Middleton, who had been engaged in managng the previous violations, most busy to perpetrate the last: that very Hasting's, whom, on his death bed, he had left the guardian of his wife and mother, and family, turning all those dear relations, the objects of his solemn trust, forth to the merciless seasons, and to a more merciless soldiery! A mind touched with superstition must indeed have cherished such a contemplation with peculiar impressions! — That Mr Hastings was regularly acquainted with all the enormities committed on the Begums there was the clearest proof; — It

was true that Middleton was rebuked for not being more exact. He did not, perhaps, descend to the detail; he did not give him an account of the number of groans which were heaved; of the quantity of tears which were shed; of the weight of the fetters; or of the depth of the dungeons: but he communicated every step which he took to accomplish the base and unwarrantable end. He told him, that to save appearances they must use the name of the Nabob, and that they need go no farther than was absolutely necessary; this he might venture to say without being suspected by Mr Hastings of too severe a morality. The Governor-General also endeavoured to throw a share of the guilt on the council, although Mr Wheeler had never taken any share, and Mr Macpherson had not arrived in India when the scene began. After contending that he had shrunk from the inquiry ordered by the court of directors, under a new and pompous doctrine, that the majesty of justice was to be approached with supplication, and was not to degrade itself by hunting for crimes; forgetting the infamous employment to which he had appointed an English chief justice, to hunt for criminal charges against innocent, defenceless women. — Mr Sheridan said, he trusted that house would vindicate the insulted character of

justice; that they would demonstrate its true quality, essence, and purposes — they would demonstrate it to be, in the case of Mr Hastings, active, inquisitive, and avenging.

Mr Sheridan remarked, that he heard of factions and parties in that house, and they existed. There was scarcely a subject upon which they were not broken and divided into sects. The prerogative of the crown found its advocates among the representatives of the people. The privileges of the people found opponents even in the house of commons itself. Habits, connexions, parties, all led to diversity of opinion. But when inhumanity presented itself to their observations, it found no division among them : they attacked it as their common enemy ; and, as if the character of this land was involved in their zeal for its ruin, they left it not till it was completely overthrown. It was not given to that house, to behold the objects of their compassion and benevolence in the present extensive consideration, as it was to the officers who relieved, and who so feelingly described the extatic emotions of gratitude in the instant of deliverance. They could not behold the workings of the heart, the quivering lips, the trickling tears, the loud and yet tremulous joys of the millions whom their vote of this night would for ever save from the

cruelty of corrupted power. But though they could not directly see the effect, was not the true enjoyment of their benevolence increased by the blessing being conferred unseen? Would not the omnipotence of Britain be demonstrated to the wonder of nations, by stretching its mighty arm across the deep, and saving by its *fiat* distant millions from destruction? And would the blessings of the people thus saved, dissipate in empty air? No! if I may dare to use the figure, — we shall constitute Heaven itself our proxy, to receive for us the blessings of their pious gratitude, and the payers of their thanksgiving. — It is with confidence, therefore, Sir, that I move you on this charge, « that Warren Hastings be impeached. »

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## BRILLIANT SPEECH,

At Westminster Hall in summing up the evidence on the Begum charge, on the trial of Mr. Hastings.

JUNE 13, 1788.

Mr SHERIDAN began, by apologizing for the interruption which his indisposition had caused on the former day. He assured their lordships, in the strongest terms, that nothing but the importance of the cause, to which he felt himself totally unable to do justice, could have made him trespass on that indulgence, which on other occasions, he had so amply experienced.

He had then concluded, with submitting to their lordships, the whole of the correspondence, as far as it could be obtained, between the principals and agents, in the nefarious plot carried on against the Nabob Vizier and the Begums of Oude. These letters were worthy the most abstracted attention of their lordships, as containing not only a narrative of that foul and unmanly conspiracy, but also a detail of the motives and ends for which it was formed, and

an exposition of the trick, the quibble, the prevarication, and the untruth with which it was then acted, and now attempted to be defended! — The question would undoubtedly suggest itself, why the correspondence ever was produced by the parties against whom it was now adduced in evidence, and who had so much reason to distrust the propriety of their own conduct? — To this the answer was, that it was owing to a mutual and *providential* resentment which had broken out between the parties, which was generally the case between persons concerned in such transactions. M. Middleton at was incensed, and felt a galling triumph in the confidence reposed by the Governor-General in other agents. Mr Hastings was offended by the *tardy wariness* which marked the conduct of Middleton; by the various remonstrances by the agent—though as knowing the man to whom they were addressed, they were all grounded on motives of policy, not of humanity; and of expediency, which left justice entirely out of the question; but the great ostensible ground of quarrel was, that Middleton had dared to spend *two days* in negotiation — though that delay had prevented the general massacre of upwards of *two thousand persons*! — The real cause, however, of this difference, was a firm belief on the

part of Mr Hastings, that Mr. Middleton had inverted their different situations, and kept the *lion's share* of plunder to himself. There were, undoubtedly, some circumstances to justify this suspicion. At the time when Mr Hastings had first complained, the Nabob's treasury was empty, and his troops so mutinous for their pay, as even to threaten his life; yet in this moment of *gratitude* and *opulence*, Middleton intimated the Nabob's desire to make Mr Hastings a present of 100,000*l.* That sacrifice, however, not being deemed sufficient, Mr Middleton was recalled, and Major Palmer was sent in his room, with instructions to tell the Nabob that such a donation was *not* to be attempted: the prince, however, with an unfortunate want of recollection, said that "no such offer had ever been in his mind." — Thus, it had always been considered as the heightening of a favor bestowed, that the receiver should not know from what quarter it came; but it was reserved for Mr Middleton to improve on this by such a *delicate refinement*, that the person giving should be totally ignorant of the favor he conferred!

But notwithstanding these little differences and suspicions, Mr Hastings and Mr Middleton, on the return of the latter to Calcutta in Octo-



ber, 1782, continued to live in the same style of *friendly collusion*, and *fraudulent familiarity* as ever. But when Mr Bristow, not answering the purposes of Mr Hastings, was accused on the *suborned* letters procured from the Nabob, one of which pronounced him the blackest character in existence, while another, of the same date, spoke of him as a very honest fellow; Mr Hastings thought it might appear particular; and therefore, after their intimacy of six months, accuses Mr Middleton also before the board at Calcutta. It was then, that in the rash eagerness which distinguished his pursuit of every object, Mr Hastings had incautiously, but happily for the present purposes of justice, brought forth these secret letters. It mattered not what were the views which induced Mr Hastings to bring that charge; whether he had drawn up the accusation, or obliged Mr Middleton with his *aid* in framing a *defence*; the whole ended in a repartee, and a poetical quotation from the Governor-General. The only circumstance material to the purposes of humanity, was the production of instruments, by which those who had violated every principle of justice and benevolence, were to see their guilt explained, and it was to be hoped, to experience that punishment which they deserved.

To those *private* letters it was that their lordships were to look for whatever elucidation of the subject could be drawn from the parties concerned : written in the moments of confidence, they declared the real motive and object of each measure ; the *public* letters were only to be regarded as proofs of guilt, whenever they established a contradiction. The counsel for the prisoner had chosen, as the safest ground, to rely on the public letters, written for the concealment of fraud and purpose of deception. They had, for instance, particularly dwelt on a public letter from Mr Middleton, dated in December, 1781, which intimated some particulars of supposed contumacy in the Begums, with a view to countenance the transactions which shortly after took place, and particularly the resumption of the Jaghires. But this letter both Sir Elijah Impey and Mr Middleton had admitted, in their examination at that bar, to be totally false ; though if it were in every point true, the apprehension of resistance to a measure could not by any means be made a ground for the enforcement of that measure in the first instance. The counsel seemed displeased with Mr Middleton for the answer, and therefore repeated the question. The witness, however, did not really fall into their humour ; for he declared,

that he did not recollect a particle of the letter; and though *memory* was undoubtedly not the *forte* of Mr Middleton, he was not, perhaps, entirely faulty on this occasion, as the letter was certainly of a *later* fabrication, and perhaps not from his hand. This letter, however, was also in direct contradiction to every one of the defences set up by Mr Hastings. — Another public letter, which had been equally dwelt on, spoke of the «determination of the Nabob» to resume the Jaghires. It had appeared in evidence, that the Nabob could by no means be compelled to yield to their measures — that it was not until Mr Middleton had actually issued his own *per-wannas* for the collection of the rents, that the Nabob, rather than be brought to the utmost state of degradation, agreed to let the measure be brought forward on his own act! The resistance of the Begums to that measure was noticed in the same letter, as an instance of *female levity* — as if their defence of the property assigned for their subsistence was to be made a reproach; — or that they deserved a reproof for *female lightness*, by entertaining a *feminine* objection — to their being *starved*!

This resistance to the measure, which was expected, and the consoling slaughter on which Mr Hastings relied, were looked to in all those

letters as a justification of the measure itself. There was not the smallest mention of the *anterior* rebellion, which by prudent *after-thought* had been so greatly magnified. There was not a syllable of those dangerous machinations which were to have dethroned the Nabob ; — of those sanguinary artifices by which the English were to have been extirpated — Not a particle concerning those practices was mentioned in any of Middleton's letters to Hastings, or in the still more confidential communication which he maintained with Sir Elijah Impey ; though after the latter his letters were continually posting, even when the Chief Justice was travelling round the country in search of affidavits. When, on the 28th of November, he was busied at Lucknow on that honorable business, and when three days after he was found at Chunar, at the distance of two hundred miles, prompting his instruments, and like Hamlet's Ghost exclaiming — "*Swear!*" — his progress on that occasion was so whimsically sudden, when contrasted with the gravity of his employ, that an observer would be tempted to quote again from the same scene, — "*Ha! Old Truepenny, canst thou mole so fast i' the ground?*" — Here, however, the comparison ceased — for when Sir Elijah made his visit to Lucknow, "*to whet the almost blunted purpose*" of the Nabob,

his language was wholly different from that of the poet : — it would have been much against his purpose to have said ,

• Taint not thy mind , nor let thy soul contrive  
• Against thy mother aught ! •

On the subject of those affidavits, he would only make another single observation. Sir Elijah Impey had denied all acquaintance with their contents , though he had been actually accompanied to Buxar by major Davy, who there translated them from the Persian, for the use of Mr Hastings ! There was amongst them, an affidavit taken in English ; from a native at Buxar, but which was first explained to the deponent by Major Davy in the presence of Sir Elijah Impey. How far therefore the assertion of the Chief Justice was plausible, and how far this fact was consistent with that assertion , he should leave it to their lordships to determine.

It was in some degree observable, that not one of the private letters of Mr Hastings had been produced at any time. Even Middleton , when all confidence was broken between them, by the production of his private correspondence at Calcutta, either feeling for his own safety, or sunk under the fascinating influence of his mas-

ter, did not dare attempt a retaliation! — The letters of Middleton, however, were sufficient to prove the situation of the Nabob, when pressed to the measure of resuming the Jaghires, in which he had been represented as acting wholly from himself. He was there described as lost in sullen melancholy — with feelings agitated beyond expression, and with every mark of agonized sensibility. To such a degree was this apparent, that even Middleton was moved to interfere for a temporary respite, in which he might be more reconciled to the measure. — “I am fully of opinion,” said he, “that the despair of the Nabob must impel him to violence; I know also that the violence must be fatal to himself; but yet I think, that with his present feelings he will disregard all consequences.” Mr Johnson also, the assistant-resident, wrote at the same time to Mr Hastings, to aver to him that the measure was dangerous, that it would require a total reform of the collection which could not be made without a campaign! This was British justice! this was British humanity! Mr Hastings ensures to the allies of the company, in the strongest terms, their prosperity and his protection; the former he secures by sending an army to plunder them of their wealth and to desolate their soil! His protection is fraught with a similar security; like that of a

vulture to a lamb ; grappling in its vitals ! thirsting for its blood ! scaring off each petty kite that hovers round ; and then , with an insulting perversion of terms , calling sacrifice , *protection* ! — an object for which history seeks for any similarity in vain . The deep searching annals of Tacitus ; — the luminous philosophy of Gibbon ; — all the records of man's transgressing , from original sin to the present period , dwindle into comparative insignificance of enormity ; both in aggravation of vile principles , and extent of their consequential ruin ! The victims of this oppression were confessedly destitute of all power to resist their oppressors ; but that debility , which , from other bosoms , would have claimed some compassion , with respect to the mode of suffering , here excited but the ingenuity of torture ! Even when every feeling of the Nabob was subdued , nature made a lingering , feeble stand within his bosom ; but even then that cold unfeeling spirit of magnanimity , with which his doom was fixed , returned with double acrimony to its purpose , and compelled him to inflict on a parent that destruction , of which he was himself reserved but to be the last victim !

Yet , when cruelty seemed to have reached its bounds , and guilt to have ascended to its climax , there was something in the character of Mr Has-

tings, which seemed to transcend the latter, and overleap the former; and of this kind was the letter to the Nabob, which was dispatched on this occasion. To rebuke Mr Middleton for his moderation, as was instantly done, was easily performed through the medium of a public and a private letter. But to write to the Nabob in such a manner that the command might be conveyed, and yet the letter afterwards shewn to the world, was a task of more difficulty; but which it appeared by the event was admirably suited to the genius of Mr Hastings. His letter was dated the 15th of February, 1782, though the Jaghires had been then actually seized; and it was in proof that it had been sent at a much earlier period. He there assured the Nabob of his coincidence with his wishes respecting the resumption of the Jaghires; he declares, that if he found any difficulty in the measure, he, Mr Hastings, would go to his *assistance* in person, and lend his aid to *punish* those who *opposed* it; "for that nothing could be more ardent than his friendship, or more eager than his zeal for his welfare." The most desperate intention was clothed in the mildest language. But the Nabob knew, by sad experience, the character with whom he had to deal, and therefore was not to be deceived; he saw the *dagger* glistening in the



hand which was treacherously extended, as if to his assistance; and from that moment the last faint ray of nature expired in his bosom. Mr Middleton from that time extended his iron sceptre without resistance; the Jaghires were seized,—every measure was carried,—and the Nabob, with his feelings lacerated, and his dignity degraded, was no longer considered as an object of regard. Though these were circumstances exasperating to the human heart, which felt the smallest remains of sensibility, yet it was necessary, in idea, to review the whole from the time that this treachery was first conceived, to that when by a series of artifices the most execrable, it was brought to a completion. Mr Hastings would there be seen standing aloof indeed, but not inactive in the war! He would be discovered in reviewing his agents, rebuking at one time the pale conscience of Mr Middleton, and at another, relying on the stouter villainy of Hyder Beg Cawn. With all the calmness of veteran delinquency, his eye ranged through the busy prospect, piercing through the darkness of subordinate guilt, and arranging with congenial adroitness the tools of his crimes, and the instruments of his cruelty.

The feelings of the several parties at the time would be most properly judged of by their res-

pective correspondence. When the Bow Begum, despairing of redress from the Nabob, addressed herself to Mr Middleton, and reminded him of the guarantee which he had signed, she was instantly promised that the amount of her Jaghire should be made good; though Mr Middleton said he could not interfere with the *sovereign* decision of the Nabob respecting the lands. The deluded and unfortunate woman « thanked God that Mr Middleton was at hand for her relief; » at the very instant when he was directing every effort to her destruction; when he had actually written the orders which were to take collection out of the hands of her agents! Even when the Begum was undeceived, — when she found that British faith was no protection, — when she found that she should leave the country, and prayed to the God of nations not to grant his peace to those who remained behind, still there was no charge of *rebellion*, — no recrimination made to all her reproaches for the broken faith of the English; — nay, when stung to madness, she asked « how long would be their reign? » no mention of her disaffection was brought forward; the stress was therefore idle, which the counsel for the prisoner strove to lay on these expressions of an injured and enraged woman. When at last irritated beyond bearing, she denounced infamy on the heads of

her oppressors, who was there who would not say that she spoke in a *prophetic* spirit, and that what she had then predicted, had not even to its last letter been accomplished ! But did Mr Middleton, even to this violence, retort any particle of accusation ? No ; he sent a *jocose* reply ; stating, that he had received such a letter under her seal, but that from its contents he could not suspect it to come from her ; and hoping, therefore, that she might detect the *forgery* ! Thus did he add to foul injuries, the vile aggravation of a *brutal jest* ; like the tiger that prowls over the scene where his ravages were committed, he shewed the savageness of his nature, by grinning over his prey, and fawning over the last agonies of his unfortunate victim.

Those letters were then enclosed to the Nabob, who, no more than the rest, made any attempt to justify himself by imputing criminality to the Begums. He merely sighed a hope, that his conduct to his parents had drawn no shame upon his head ; and declared his intention to punish — not any disaffection in the Begum — but some officious servants who had dared to foment the misunderstanding between them and the Nabob. A letter was finally sent to Mr Hastings, about six days before the seizure of the treasure from the Begums, declaring their innocence, and re-

ferring the Governor-General to Captain Gordon, whose life they had protected, and whose safety should have been their justification. That enquiry was never made; it was looked on as unnecessary; because the conviction of their innocence was too deeply impressed!

The counsel, in recommending attention to the public in preference to the private letters, had remarked, in particular, that one letter should not be taken as evidence, because it was manifestly and abstractedly private, as it contained in one part the anxieties of Mr Middleton for the illness of his son. This was a singular argument indeed; and the circumstance, in his mind, merited strict observation, though not in the view in which it was placed by the counsel. It went to shew that some at least of those concerned in these transactions, felt the force of those ties, which their efforts were directed to tear asunder;—that those who could ridicule the respective attachment of a mother and a son;—who would prohibit the reverence of the son to the mother who had given him life;—who could deny to *maternal debility* the protection which *filial tenderness* should afford;—were yet sensible of the *straining* of those *chords* by which they were connected.—There was something connected with this transaction so wretchedly

horrible, and so vilely loathsome, as to excite the most contemptible disgust. If it were not a part of his duty, it would be superfluous to speak of the sacredness of the ties which those aliens to feeling, — those apostates to humanity had thus divided. In such an assembly as that which I have the honor of addressing, there is not an eye but must dart reproof at this conduct; — not a heart but must anticipate its condemnation. « **FILIAL PIETY!** It is the primal bond of society—it is that instinctive principle, which, panting for its proper good, soothes, unbidden, each sense and sensibility of man! — it now quivers on every lip! — it now beams from every eye! — it is an emanation of that gratitude, which softening under the sense of recollected good, is eager to own the vast countless debt it ne'er, alas! can pay, honorable self-denials, life-preserving cares! — it is that part of our practice, where duty drops its awe! — where reverence refines into love! — it asks no aid of memory! — it needs not the deductions of reason! — pre-existing, paramount over all, whether law, or human rule, few arguments can increase and none can diminish it! — it is the sacrament of our nature! — not only the duty, but the indulgence of man — it is his first great privilege — it is amongst his last most endearing delight! — it causes the bosom to

glow with reverberated love! — it requites the visitations of nature, and returns the blessings that have been received! — it fires emotion into vital principle — it renders habituated instinct into a master-passion — sways all the sweetest energies of man — hangs over each vicissitude of all that must pass away — aids the melancholy virtues in their last sad tasks of life, to cheer the languors of decrepitude and age — explores the thought — elucidates the aching eye! — and breathes sweet consolation even in the awful moment of dissolution! »

The Jaghires being seized, Mr Sheridan proceeded to observe, the Begums were left without the smallest share of that pecuniary compensation promised by Mr Middleton; and as, when tyranny and *injustice* take the field, they are always attended by their *camp-followers*, paltry, pilfering, and petty insult; so, in this instance, the goods taken from them were sold at a mock sale at inferior value. Even gold and jewels, to use the language of the Begums, instantly lost their value when it was known that they came from them! Their ministers were therefore imprisoned to extort the deficiency which this fraud had occasioned; and those mean arts were employed to justify a continuance of cruelty. Yet, these again were little to the frauds of Mr Hastings. After

extorting upwards of 600,000 pounds sterling he forbade Mr Middleton to come to a *conclusive settlement*. He knew that the *treasons* of our allies in India, had their origin solely in the wants of the Company. He could not, therefore, say, that the Begums were entirely innocent, until he had consulted the general *record of crimes!* — the *cash account* at Calcutta! And this *prudence* of Mr Hastings was fully justified by the event; for there was actually found a balance of *twenty-six* lacks more against the Begums, which 260,000 pounds worth of treason had never been dreamed of before, "Talk not to us," said the Governor-General, "of their guilt, or innocence, but as it suits the Company's *credit!* We will not try them by the code of Justinian, nor the Institutes of Timur; — we will not judge them either by the British laws, or their local customs! No! We will try them by the *multiplication table*, — we will find them guilty by the *rule of three*, — and we will condemn them according to the sapient and profound institutes of — *Cocker's Arithmetic.*"

Proceeding next to state the distresses of the Begums in the Zenana, and of the women in the Khord Mahal, Mr Sheridan stated, that some observation was due to the remark made by Mr Hastings in his defense, where he declared,

« that whatever were the distresses there, and whoever was the agent, the measure was, in his opinion, reconcileable to justice, honor, and sound policy. » Major Scott, *the incomparable agent* of Mr Hastings, had declared this passage to have been written by Mr Hastings with his own hand. Mr Middleton, it appeared, had also avowed his share in those humane transactions, and blushing retired. Mr Hastings then cheered his drooping spirits. « Whatever part of the load, » said he, « yours cannot bear, my *unburdened* character shall assume. I will crown your labors with my irresistible approbation. Thus, *twin-warriors*, ye shall go forth ! you find *memory*, and I'll find *character*—and assault, repulse, and contumely shall all be set at defiance ! »

If I could not prove, continued Mr Sheridan, that those acts of Mr Middleton were in reality the acts of Mr Hastings, I should not trouble your lordships by combating these assertions ; but as that part of his criminality can be incontestibly ascertained, I shall unequivocally appeal to the assembled legislators of this realm, and call on them to say, whether those acts were justifiable on the score of *policy*. I shall appeal to all the august presidents in the courts of British jurisprudence, and to all the learned ornaments of the profession, to decide whether these



actions were reconcileable to *justice*. — I shall appeal to a reverend assemblage of prelates, feeling for the general interest of humanity, and for the honor of the religion to which they belong — let them determine in their own minds, whether those acts of Mr Hastings and Mr Middleton, were such as a *Christian* ought to perform, or a *man* to avow!

He next detailed the circumstances of the imprisonment of Bahr Ally Cawn and Jewar Ally Cawn, the ministers of the Nabob, on the grounds above stated; with them was confined that *arch-rebel* Sumpshire Cawn, by whom every act of hostility that had taken place against the English, was stated to have been committed. No enquiry, however, was made concerning his *treason*, though many had been held respecting the *treasure* of the others. He was not so far noticed as to be deprived of his *food* (1); nor was he even compli-

(1) The following note from Mr. Middleton to Lieutenant Francis Rutledge, dated January 20, 1782, had been read in evidence:—

• Sir,

« When this note is delivered to you by Hoolas Roy, I have to desire, that you order the two prisoners to be put in irons keeping them from all food, etc., agreeable to my instructions of yesterday. (Signed) « NATH. MIDDLETON. »

mented with *fetters!* and yet when he is on a future day to be informed of the mischiefs he was now stated to have done, he must think that

Mr Middleton had indeed refused to acknowledge that he wrote this note, alleging that, as he had been accused by Mr Hastings for his conduct at Fyzabad, he begged he might not be forced to answer questions that would criminate himself. But what was the nature of the accusation brought against Mr Middleton by Mr Hastings? Was it, that he had used harsh methods to get possession of the treasures? No—the charge was, that he had shewn too much forbearance; and Mr Middleton's answer to Mr Hastings's charge, was of a nature which proved that it was not of too great severity that the governor-general had accused him. « It could not, I flatter myself, » said Mr Middleton, « be termed a long or unwarrantable delay, (two days). « The Nabob was *son* to the Begum whom we were to proceed against—a *son* against a *mother* must at least *save appearances* in his mode of proceeding. In the East it is well known that no man, either by himself or his troops, can enter the walls of a Zenana, scarcely in the case of acting against an open enemy, much less of an ally—an ally acting against his own mother. The outer walls, and the Begum agents, were all that were liable to immediate attack; they were dealt with, and successfully, as the event proved. No further rigour than what I have exerted, could be used against females in this country. *Where Force could be employed, it was not spared.* »

This defence clearly shewed, that Mr Hastings had accused Mr Middleton, not of having used *too much severity*, but of *not having used enough*.

on being forgotten, he had a very *providential escape!* The others were, on the contrary, taken from their milder prison at Fyzabad; and when threats could effect nothing, transferred by the meek humanity of Mr Middleton to the fortress of Chunargur. There, where the British flag was flying, they were doomed to deeper dungeons, heavier chains, and severer punishments;—there, where that flag was flying, which was wont to cheer the depressed, and to elate the subdued heart of misery, these venerable, but unfortunate men were fated to encounter something *lower* than *perdition*, and something *black-er* than *despair!* It appeared from the evidence of Mr Holt and others, that they were both cruelly flogged, though one was about seventy years of age, to extort a confession of the buried wealth of the Begums! Being charged with disaffection, they proclaimed their innocence. « Tell us where are the remaining treasures, (was the reply) — it is only treachery to your immediate sovereigns:—and you will then be fit associates for the representatives of British faith and British justice in India!» — « Oh! Faith, Oh Justice!» exclaimed Mr Sheridan. « I conjure you by your sacred names to depart for a moment from this place, though it be your peculiar residence; nor hear your names profaned by such

a sacrilegious combination, as that which I am now compelled to repeat! — where all the fair forms of nature and art, truth and peace, policy and honor, shrunk back aghast from the deleterious shade! — where all existences, nefarious and vile, had sway; — where, amidst the black agents on one side, and Middleton with Impey on the other, the toughest head, the most unfeeling heart! the great figure of the piece, characteristic in his place, stood aloof and independent from the puny profligacy in his train! — but far from idle and inactive, — turning a malignant eye on all mischief that awaited him! — the multiplied apparatus of temporising expedients, and intimidating instruments! now cringing on his prey, and fawning on his vengeance! — now quickening the limpid pace of craft, and forcing every stand that retiring nature can make in the heart! violating the attachments and the decorums of life! sacrificing every emotion of tenderness and honor! and flagitiously levelling all the distinctions of national characteristics! with a long catalogue of crimes and aggravations, beyond the reach of thought, for human malignity to perpetrate, or human vengeance to punish!

It might have been hoped, for the honor of the human heart, that the Begums had been

themselves exempted from a share in these sufferings; and that they had been wounded only through the sides of their ministers. The reverse of this, however, was the fact. Their palace was surrounded by a guard, which was withdrawn by Major Gilpin, to avoid the growing resentments of the people, and replaced by Mr Middleton, through his fears from that «dreadful responsibility» which was imposed on him by Mr Hastings. The women of the Khord Mahal, who had not been involved in the Begums' supposed crimes, who had raised no *sub-rebellion* of their own; and who, it had been proved, lived in a distinct dwelling, were causelessly involved in the same punishment; their residence surrounded with guards, they were driven to despair by famine, and when they poured forth in sad procession, were driven back by the soldiery, and beaten with bludgeons to the scene of madness which they had quitted. These were acts, Mr Sheridan observed, which, when told, needed no comment; he should not offer a single syllable to awaken their lordships' feelings; but leave it to the facts which had been proved, to make their own impressions.

The argument now reverted solely to this point, whether Mr Hastings was to be answerable for the crimes committed by his agent? It had

been fully proved that Mr Middleton had signed the treaty with the superior Begum in October, 1778. He had acknowledged signing some others of other dates, but could not *recollect* his authority. These treaties had been fully recognized by Mr Hastings, as was fully proved by the evidence of Mr Purling, in the year 1780. In that of October, 1778, the Jaghire was secured, which was allotted for the support of the women in the Khord Mahal: on the first idea of resuming these Jaghires a provision should have been secured to those unfortunate women; and in this respect Mr Hastings was clearly guilty of a crime, by his omission of making such provision. But still he pleaded, that he was not accountable for the cruelties which had been exercised. This was the plea which Tyranny, aided by its prime minister Treachery, was always sure to set up. Mr Middleton had attempted to strengthen this plea, by endeavouring to claim the whole infamy of those transactions, and to *monopolize* the guilt! He dared even to aver that he had been condemned by Mr Hastings for the ignominious part he had acted: he dared to avow this, because Mr Hastings was on his trial, and he thought he should never be tried;—but in the face of the court, and before he left the bar, he was compelled to confess that it was for the *lenity*

not the *severity* of his proceedings that he had been reproved by Mr Hastings.

It would not, he trusted, be argued, that because Mr Hastings had not marked every passing shade of guilt, and because he had only given the bold outline of cruelty, that he was therefore to be acquitted. It was laid down by the law of England — that law which was the perfection of reason — that a person ordering an act to be done by his agent, was answerable for that act with all its consequences. Middleton had been appointed, in 1777, the avowed and private agent — the *second-self* of Mr Hastings. The Governor-General had ordered the measure : Middleton declared that it could not have been effected by milder means. Even if he never saw, nor heard afterwards of the consequences of the measure, he was answerable for every pang that was inflicted, and for all the blood that was shed. But he had heard, and that instantly, of the whole. He had written to arraign Middleton of forbearance and of neglect ! He commanded them to work upon their hopes and fears, and to leave no means untried, until — to speak their own language, but which would be better suited to the *banditti* of a *cavern* — “ they obtained possession of the secret hoards of the old ladies.” He would not allow even of a delay of two days

to smoothe the compelled approaches of a son to his mother, on such an occasion! His orders were peremptory; and if a massacre did not take place, it was the merit of accident, and not of Mr Hastings. After this would it be said, that the prisoner was ignorant of the acts, or not culpable for their consequences? It was true, he had not enjoined in so many words the *guards*, the *famine*, and the *bludgeons*; he had not weighed the *fetters*, nor numbered the *lashes* to be inflicted on his victims. But yet he was equally guilty, as if he had borne an active and personal share in each transaction. It was, as if he had commanded that the heart should be torn from the bosom, and yet had enjoined that no blood should follow. He was in the same degree accountable to the law, to his country, to his conscience, and to his God!

Mr Hastings had endeavoured also to get rid of a part of his guilt, by observing that he was but *one* of the supreme council, and that all the rest had sanctioned those transactions with their approbation. If Mr Hastings could prove, however, that others participated in the guilt, it would not tend to diminish his own criminality. But the fact was, that the council had in nothing erred so much as in a criminal credulity given to the declarations of the Governor-General. They



knew not a word of those transactions until they were finally concluded. It was not until the January following, that they saw the mass of falsehood which had been published under the title of « Mr Hastings's Narrative.» They had been then unaccountably duped into the suffering a letter to pass, dated the 29th of November, intended to deceive the directors into a belief, that they had received intelligence at that time, which was not the fact. These observations, Mr Sheridan said, were not meant to cast any obloquy on the council;— they had undoubtedly been deceived, and the deceit practised on them by making them sign the Narrative, was of itself a strong accusation of Mr Hastings, and a decided proof of his own consciousness of guilt. When tired of corporeal infliction, his tyranny was gratified by insulting the understanding. Other tyrants, though born to greatness, such as a Nero, or a Caligula, might have been roused, it had been supposed, by reflection, and awakened into contrition;— but here was an instance which spurned at theory, and baffled supposition: A man born to a state at least of equality;— inured to calculation, and brought up in habits of reflection;— and yet proving in the end that monster in nature, a *deliberate and reasoning tyrant.*

The Board of Directors received those advices

which Mr Hastings thought proper to transmit; but though unfurnished with any other materials to form their judgments, they expressed very strongly their doubts, and as properly ordered an enquiry into the circumstances of the alleged disaffection of the Begums; pronouncing it, at the same time, a debt which was due to the honor and justice of the British nation. This enquiry, however, on the directions reaching India, Mr Hastings thought it absolutely necessary to elude. He stated to the council, it being merely stated, that «if on enquiry certain facts appeared,» no enquiry was thereby directly enjoined! «It would revive (said he) those animosities that subsisted between the Begums and the Vizier, which had then subsided. If the former were inclined to appeal to a foreign jurisdiction, they were the best judges of their own feeling, and should be left to make their own complaint.» All this, however, was nothing to the magnificent paragraph which concluded this minute, and to which Mr Sheridan also requested the attention of the court. «Beside, (said Mr Hastings) I hope it will not be a departure from official language to say, that the *majesty of justice* ought not to be approached without solicitation; she ought not to descend to inflame or provoke, but to withhold her judgment, until she is called on to

determine! « What is still more astonishing, is, that Sir John Macpherson, (who, though a gentleman of sense and honor, he stated to be rather Oriental in his imagination, and not learned in the sublime and beautiful, from the immortal leader of this prosecution, and who had before opposed Mr Hastings) was caught by this *bold bombastic quibble*, and joined in the same words, « that the *majesty of justice* ought not to be approached without solicitation. »

« But *justice* is not this halt and miserable object! (continued Mr Sheridan) It is not the ineffective bauble of an Indian pagod! — it is not the portentous phantom of despair; — it is not like any fabled monster, formed in the eclipse of reason, and found in some unhallowed grove of superstitious darkness, and political dismay! No, my lords!

In the happy reverse of all these, I turn from this disgusting caricature to the *real image*! — *Justice* I have now before me, *august and pure*; the abstract idea of all that would be perfect in the spirits and the aspirings of men! — where the mind rises, where the heart expands; — where the countenance is ever placid and benign; — where her favorite attitude is to stoop to the unfortunate — to hear their cry, and to help them, — to rescue and relieve, to succour and save: —

majestic from its mercy; venerable from its utility: — uplifted without pride, — firm without obduracy: — beneficent in each preference: — lovely, though in her frown! »

« *On that justice I rely*; deliberate and sure, abstracted from all party purpose and political speculations! not in words, but on facts! — You, my lords, who hear me, I conjure by those *rights* it is your best privilege to preserve; by that fame it is your best pleasure to inherit; by all those *feelings* which refer to the first term in the series of existence, the *original compact* of our nature — our *controlling rank* in the creation. — This is the call on all, to administer to truth and equity, as they would satisfy the laws and satisfy themselves, with the most exalted bliss, possible, or conceivable for our nature. — the *self-approving consciousness of virtue*, when the condemnation we look for will be one of the most ample mercies accomplished for mankind since the creation of the world! »

My lords, I have done!

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# ARMY ESTIMATES.

## FRENCH REVOLUTION.

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FEBRUARY 9, 1790.

MR SHERIDAN declared, that he rose with the greatest regret; but that the very reasons which his right honorable friend (Mr Burke) had given for the sentiments which he had that day uttered, namely, an apprehension of being supposed to acquiesce in the opinions of those for whom he entertained the highest regard, and with whom he had uniformly acted, operated also on his mind, and made him feel it a duty to declare, that he differed decidedly from that right honorable gentleman in almost every word that he had uttered respecting the French Revolution. Mr Sheridan added some warm compliments to Mr Burke's general principles; but said that he could not conceive how it was possible for a person of such principles, or for any man who valued our own constitution, and revered the Revolution that

obtained it for us, to unite with such feelings an indignant and unqualified abhorrence of all the proceedings of the patriotic party in France.

He conceived their's to be as just a Revolution as ours, proceeding upon as sound a principle and a greater provocation. He vehemently defended the general views and conduct of the National Assembly. He could not even understand what was meant by the charge against them of having overturned the laws, the justice, and the revenues of their country. What were their laws? The arbitrary mandates of capricious despotism. What their justice? The partial adjudications of venal magistrates. What their revenues? National bankruptcy. This he thought the fundamental error of the right honorable gentleman's argument, that he accused the National Assembly of creating the evils, which they had found existing in full deformity at the first hour of their meeting. The public creditor had been defrauded; the manufacturer was out of employ; trade was languishing; famine clang upon the poor; despair on all. In this situation, the wisdom and feelings of the nation were appealed to by the government; and was it to be wondered at by *Englishmen*, that a people, so circumstanced, should search for the cause and source of all their calamities; or that they should

find them in the arbitrary constitution of their government, and in the prodigal and corrupt administration of their revenues? For such an evil, whom proved, what remedy could be resorted to, but a radical amendment of the frame and fabric of the constitution itself. This change was not the object and wish of the National Assembly only, it was the claim and cry of all France, united as one man for one purpose. He joined with Mr Burke in abhorring the cruelties that had been committed; but what was the striking lesson, the awful moral that was to be gathered from the outrages of the populace? What, but a superior abhorrence of that accursed system of despotic government, which had so deformed and corrupted human nature, as to make its subjects capable of such acts; a government that sets at naught the property, the liberty, and lives of the subjects; a government that deals in extortion, dungeons, and tortures; sets an example of depravity to the slaves it rules over; and, if a day of power comes to the wretched populace, it is not to be wondered at, however it is to be regretted, that they act without those feelings of justice and humanity, which the principles and the practice of their governors have stripped them of. At the same time, if there were any persons, who, for the purposes of their own private and per-

sonal ambition, had instigated those outrages, they, whatever their rank, birth, or fortune, deserved the execration of mankind. Justice, however, required, that no credit should be given to mere rumors on such a subject.

But whatever these outrages were, or whoever caused them, was the National Assembly in any respect responsible? The National Assembly, who, in all cases, had interfered with zeal and alacrity for the maintenance of order and just information — what action of theirs authorized the appellation of a *bloody, ferocious, and tyrannical democracy*? — Language, like this, had been too prevalent in some of the ministerial prints, and he had always seen it with regret; for, to traduce the National Assembly, was, in his mind, to libel the whole French nation: whatever was great or good in France, must be looked for there, or no where.

Mr Sheridan next attacked Mr Burke's declaration, that the French might have received a good constitution from their *monarch*. What! was it preparing for them in the camp of Marshal Broglio? or were they to search for it in the ruins of the Bastile? He avowed a most eager and sanguine hope that the *despotism of France should never be restored*. He avowed this, not only as a friend to the general rights of mankind, but as a



politician, speaking only for the advantage of his country. He was convinced, that it was for the interest of Great Britain, that the despotism of France should be destroyed. Whoever looked into our history, would come at once to the opinion, that the greater part of the expense of blood and treasure of this nation had been owing to the circumstance of France being a *despotic government*; and, being a despotic government, being what all despotisms ever had been, a government of unprincipled ambition, and without faith or justice in its dealings with other nations. Let France amend her constitution, she *may* become more powerful in her permanent resources, but she certainly will be a juster, worthier, and more peaceable nation, and more likely to act towards us, as we do now towards her. The French were naturally a brave and generous people; their vice had been their government. In hoping, however, that that government might be radically amended, he could not be thought to approve of wanton persecution of the nobility, or any insult to royalty: it was consistent with the spirit of the most perfect constitution, that the monarch should retain all the powers, dignities, and prerogatives becoming the first magistrate of so great a country.

Mr Sheridan went into other parts of the dis-

cussion respecting the French revolution, and paid high compliments to the Marquis de la Fayette, Monsieur Bailly, and others of the French patriots; and concluded with expressing his regret that so many friends of the minister had held sentiments apparently contrary; and above all, that his right honorable friend should have suffered his humanity, however justly appealed to, to have biassed his judgment on so great a question.

Mr Sheridan concluded, with expressing a further difference with Mr Burke, with respect to our own revolution of 1688. He had never been accustomed to consider that transaction, as merely the removal of one man, and the substitution of another, but as the glorious æra that gave real and efficient freedom to this country, and established, on a permanent basis, those sacred principles of government, and reverence for the rights of men, which he, for one, could not value here, without wishing to see them diffused throughout the world.

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## ON MR GREY'S MOTIONS <sup>(1)</sup>

AGAINST ANY INTERFERENCE IN THE WAR  
BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE PORTE.

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APRIL 12, 1791.

MR SHERIDAN remarked, that although he had several times presented himself in vain to the Speaker's eye, he never felt it more unnecessary to trespass on the time of the house, than at that moment; since, if ever there was a discussion, which had been supported by the ablest arguments on one side, and with flimsy delusion opposed to them on the other, the cause discussed that day had been that cause. Not even any argument had been offered by the honorable baronet (Sir William Young) who spoke last, and who had traversed over all Europe, traced the his-

(1) Now Earl Grey. — Ed.

tory of the navigation and commerce of Russia , from the earliest period ; described her back frontiers , and all parts of her dominions ; and expatiated with as much familiarity concerning the Dnieper and the Danube , as if he had been talking of the Worcestershire canal , and pictured the empress as a female Colossus , standing with one foot on the banks of the Black Sea , and the other on the coast of the Baltic ; yet , in spite of this fund of knowledge and ingenuity , all which the honorable baronet said , did not amount to an argument against the motion , which , in his mind , was entitled to the smallest weight. From the right honorable gentleman opposite to him , ( Mr Dundas ) who was something like a minister , though not actually one , he expected to have heard important reasoning ; but he presumed he had continued dumb , because if he had risen to speak , it might have been suspected that he knew something , and thus have broken in upon that impenetrable mystery , and that magnificent silence which was to characterise the day , as far as regarded the conduct of those who alone could have afforded the house information , which they had a right to expect. Those who had risen to speak , like the honorable baronet who had just sat down , had professed either that they knew nothing of the cause of the armament , or had

indulged in stating what they guessed to be that cause ; thus the sum and substance of all the arguments against the motion had been professed ignorance on the one hand, or avowed conjecture on the other. If, then, they were to guess only from conjecture, and to argue from maxims drawn from maps and books, as the last honorable gentleman on the other side had done, could they possibly arrive at any satisfactory knowledge on the subject? Are maxims drawn from maps and books the cause for which an English house of commons are to plunge their country into a war, and waste the blood and treasure of their constituents! The reasons stated by different gentlemen, among their guesses of the causes of the war, were not more different than extraordinary. One right honorable gentleman had assigned something that looked like an argument, which might account for the right honorable Chancellor of the Exchequer's silence. He had stated, that if his right honorable friend said any thing relative to the negotiation, it might put it out of the power of the negotiating parties to recede or retract what they had advanced, and thus render a war unavoidable. Did the right honorable gentleman then think it necessary to recede and retract any of the blustering menaces which he had made to Russia? If he did, it

ought to be avowed, that an opportunity might be given for such retraction. But that right honorable gentleman, who had talked of the minister's receding, had also alluded to one matter as the cause of the war, from the bare mention of which he shrunk with horror; he had hinted at the armed neutrality, and at the possibility of this being a fit opportunity for retaliating and revenging that measure. Were we then to go to war for so base a purpose, as to give vent to the hatred and burning resentment which had been avowed to have rankled in our bosoms for so many years? He hoped not. The same right honorable gentlemen had talked of the partition of Poland. Were they to resent that event at this crisis? If so, it ought to be avowed. But he would not believe that any of these could be the cause of the war. He would rather turn to the noble lord, who had, in his opinion, acted in a more open and manly way, and rested the argument on its true ground. The noble lord had expressly avowed that he gave his consent on the ground of implicit confidence in the minister; and had even gone so far as to declare, that he should consider it as criminal in the minister, if he gave the house any information whatever on the subject. The ground of confidence had shifted materially since its first introduction three years ago. They

had then heard of rational confidence; since that a greater degree of confidence had been talked of; and now the noble lord had avowed that he gave the minister implicit confidence. Had they not better at once appoint the right honorable gentleman dictator, and give him the power of making war and peace just as he thought proper? The noble lord, who had, on a former occasion, shown himself very much attached to the ancient Greeks, had appeared not to be so much attached to the modern Greeks, and had said, « See what a faithless set of people these modern Greeks are! » In what, Mr Sheridan asked, did their treachery consist? — He knew of no such treachery; and he owned that he should rather have expected that the noble lord, with a classical indignation, would have lamented that the descendants of Demosthenes should not be orators, statesmen, and soldiers, but an unfortunate race of men, kept only to pamper the false taste and degraded appetites of the Ottoman court. So much out of humour had the noble lord proved himself to be with the modern Greeks, that he had been betrayed into a perfidy of quotation, and had quoted a Latin line, to his surprize, Mr Sheridan said, when he had expected a line of Homer from him at least. With regard to what had been observed of that house invading the prerogative

of the crown, if they interfered with negotiations, he was, for one, always ready to confess, that the just prerogatives of the crown should be kept sacred; but those were no friends to the prerogative, who should advise the exercise of it in the extreme, and endanger its proving obnoxious to that house. The best government under the practice of our constitution consisted in a wise blending and co-operation of the executive and legislative branches of it. The king certainly might, if he pleased, make what treaties he thought proper, and keep them from the knowledge of parliament, if he was so advised by his ministers; he might also make war and peace, and in doing that, confidence was reposed in those on whose shoulders, as a counterpoise, responsibility lay. But the moment they came to that house for support and assistance, confidence was at an end, and the hour of inquiry and control was arrived. Yet, what he wished to contend for was, that ancient, constitutional, and most useful function of a British house of commons, their capacity of advising the crown, and of being enabled, by a due application and exercise of their preventive wisdom to save the country from that expense and calamity into which they might otherwise be plunged, either by the terror of ministers, their imprudence, their neglect, or



their corruption. If the house of commons was to be deprived of that important function, and was never suffered to exercise their preventive wisdom, their chief use, as a deliberative assembly, would be lost to the public, and the whole powers of that house would be reduced to two dry points — the power of the purse, and the power of impeachment. Thus, instead of consulting them as advisers of the crown, they would be reduced to the miserable condition of acting upon public measures in the last fatal instance, that of loading their constituents with the expense of them, when it might afterwards turn out that they were measures not fit to have been pursued; and in that case, all that would be left for them to do, would be to prosecute ministers. If the purpose of a message from the crown should be at any time to tell them that the enemy was at their doors, and therefore supplies must be granted, he certainly should first ask, on whose account they were called upon, and how it happened that they had not before been apprized of the public danger? But he should grant the supplies on account of the necessity and exigency of the case. The honorable gentleman opposite to him had wondered that they should speak of the proceedings in that manner as a novelty, and remarked, that they were totally ignorant of parliamentary

constitution, if they did not know that it had been the practise of ministers, in similar cases, to ask for support, and give no explanation at the time. Ignorant, indeed, he confessed they must be, if the case was so; yet he could not but imagine that the honorable gentlemen who were so ready to give their confidence blindly and implicitly, were themselves so confident, that they ventured to quote precedents, without ever having given themselves the trouble to look and see whether they would support their argument. It so happened, that all the precedents from the year 1700 downwards, were against them, and in favor of what he had just contended for. In the case of the war of 1700, there had been a desire of preserving the balance of power in Europe, and King William had applied to the house on the occasion. Mr Sheridan read from the journals a message from King William, and the address of the house in answer. In the one, the King states the purpose of his application, and calls for the advice of his commons; and in the other, the house tells His Majesty that they will give him their advice, as soon as they are fully informed on the subject; and desire that all the treaties entered into by His Majesty may be laid before them, that they may be able to offer him their mature advice. It appeared from hence, that King

William, in the instance which he had read, did not think it beneath him to ask advice of the house of commons, and they had heard what the language of the house had been in return. As the honorable gentlemen on the other side might not like a precedent so near the revolution, he would turn to another of a more recent period, that of 1734. So far from the ministers of that day calling for the confidence of parliament, the King placed a confidence in his parliament, and put the whole business into their hands. Mr Sheridan declared, that he could not but wonder that the house bore with patience the cant of responsibility, which was preached to them by all who contented for confidence. They were perpetually saying, give ministers implicit confidence; have not they the responsibility? as if they considered responsibility as a perquisite of office, rather than the peril of their situation. If they felt the case properly, they would shrink from the bare mention of responsibility, instead of being eternally talking of it, and which convinced him that they considered responsibility as a protection, and as another word for indemnity. The other evening, when the unclaimed dividends were under discussion, a declaration had been made by one of the Bank Directors, which appeared to him at

the time to be most extraordinary. In submitting that much might be lost to the bank by forgeries, one of the directors had observed, that their custom was to let the persons presenting forged bills for payment have the money, and not prevent the commission of the crime; because unless the felony was suffered to be completed, they could not prosecute, and make an example. Mr Sheridan reasoned on the absurdity of this practice, and compared it with that of letting a minister, by unwise measures, plunge the country into a depth of calamity, from which it could not be easily extricated, merely on the idea that such a minister might be made an example of afterwards. What would they think, if those who opposed the right honorable gentleman opposite to him, saw him hurrying on the country to ruin; and, instead of resisting his destructive measures, were to say, « Stop awhile, we are aware that ministers are getting into a fine scrape, and then we shall have the satisfaction of making an example of them. » In both cases, prevention, he maintained, would be preferable to punishment; and if the bank forewent the hope of making an example, and prevented the felony from being completed, they would do much better, and save their money; and, in like manner, opposition did their duty best, in endeavoring to rescue their

country from ruin, and their constituents from taxes, by checking a minister's career in time. With regard to the motives of the war, Mr Sheridan remarked, that he did not think them of great importance; but the grounds of it seemed to him to be so extravagantly ridiculous, that he could not convey his sense of the arrogance of our interfering, better than by supposing that Russia had treated us so at the end of the last war, and letting the house feel it as their own case. Suppose, when we were making the peace, she had insisted on our giving up Negapatam, in the East-Indies, to the Dutch; — extravagant as this might appear, it was not more so than our insisting on her restoring Oczakow to the Porte. Imagine, then, that she had made a point of our resigning Negapatam to the Dutch, meaning on her part to give it to Denmark, or some other of her allies. What should we have said to such a demand? The answer would have been, what has Russia to do with our possessions in the East-Indies? We should have repelled the demand, and treated it with contempt. Suppose, in that case, the Empress had sent a fleet down the channel, and burnt Hull, in its way to London, where, on her arrival, she was determined to enforce her negotiations, by acting as an armed mediator; should not we have thought that Russia acted

most arrogantly, and most unwarrantably; and yet, her conduct in that case would not be more extraordinary than ours in the present instance. Mr Sheridan added, that he shrewdly suspected we were led on by our allies; and that the real cause of the war was a Prussian object in Poland. Suppose, however, that we went on with the war, and that in the end, the Emperor obtained what he wanted in Moldavia and Wallachia; the Empress what she wanted in Turkey; and Prussia, Thorn and Dantzic; in that case, he would venture to predict, that the lot of England would be to pay the piper, and that the expense which we might incur would be all that would fall to our share. Mr Sheridan now adverting to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, arraigned his conduct, and declared that he should not be afraid to go through his whole political life, and would undertake to prove, that most of his measures had been pregnant with mischief to the country. In the moment of bringing forward each, the right honorable gentleman had said to the house, "Give us your confidence; we are responsible!" Confidence might not, Mr Sheridan said, be always well applied. He asked, whether the right honorable gentleman recollected the very different prospects which we had been taught to turn our eyes to in this year? Did he recollect that

this was the promised millenium ! that halcyon year, in the spring of which we were to taste the sweets and blossoms it was to produce ? Did the right honorable gentleman reflect, that he had told them that they should not only have their income equal to their expenditure, but a clear million a year surplus to pay towards the diminution of the national debt, and a permanent peace establishment ? Mr Sheridan contrasted this with the actual state of the moment, the immediate prospect of another war, and the certainty of additional taxes. The people, he observed, would not bear the intolerable burdens under which they must then groan, unless the right honorable gentleman came fairly forward, and assigned a satisfactory ground for going to war. There was not one gentleman in the house who really saw a motive for it which he could reconcile to any reasonable idea. With regard to confidence, he declared that he should not give his confidence to ministers to treat with foreign courts, unless the first department of office, in which all our foreign negotiations lay, were rescued from the hands of a person who, to an over-charged conceit of his own abilities, added the rashness which always must attend inexperience, and placed in the hands of a man familiar with foreign courts, and possessed of dexterity and

simplicity sufficient to enable him to discharge the duties of the office with skill and with success. By dexterity, he said, he did not mean that cunning which another person mistook for craft, and that craft for wisdom; he meant dexterity to discover and ward off the devices and intrigues of foreign ministers, and others; and simplicity to follow the straitforward path of open manliness and plain dealing himself. He declared that he would leave it to the house to make the application of this contrast, but unless a department of so much importance, considering the present situation of foreign courts, were placed in such hands, it was impossible for him to give confidence at such a time to ministers; nor had they, in fact, any right to expect it from him, who had uniformly and openly resisted the right honorable gentleman's measures.

Mr Sheridan next turned his attention to the conduct of the right honorable gentleman opposite him, respecting Holland in 1787, for which praise had, on all hands, been candidly allowed him. He declared that if the question was put to him, and he was asked if, as a single measure, he rejoiced at it? he should, without hesitation, answer, that he did not; because he never could rejoice at seeing the stock of liberty diminished; and, by our interference, that noble republic



was again reduced to the miserable state of vassalage under which she had so long groaned; but, when he considered that it was probable at the time that Holland would have become a province to France (though subsequent events had since proved that it could not have been the consequence), he was ready to join in commending the conduct of the right honorable gentleman on that occasion. But if it were true, that the recovering our connection with Holland was nothing more than a part of a system, and that the fortress of Oczakow was to be traced from the canal at Amsterdam, he should reprobate it in the strongest terms; he would fairly declare, however, that he did not believe that the right honorable gentleman had entertained an idea of any such system at the time. He suspected that the right honorable gentleman's measures had carried him much farther than he had ever intended to go; and that the pretence of its having been a part of a predeterminate system, was nothing more than a salvo assumed for the purpose of covering the extraordinary conduct of the right honorable gentleman. Mr Sheridan here descanted on the chance of our next year, having fresh warrants issued, and being called upon to arm, in consequence of our having formed an alliance between Poland and Prussia. He went

through a summary of what had passed in the different courts of Stockholm and Madrid, during the administration of Mr Pitt, and imputed blame to him on the events of each. He also said, that among the evil consequences of the pernicious a system arising out of the treaty with Prussia, it had fastened on us a concern with the Germanic league, and that we should be lugged in as parties to the measure. He declaimed against the system, and said, let us call it any thing but system of peace; let us say it is a system of ambition, of vain glory, to see the offspring of the immortal Chatham, intriguing in all the courts of Europe, and setting himself up as the great posture-master of the balance of power, as possessing an exclusive right to be the umpire of all, and to weigh out, in patent scales of his own, the quantity of dominion that each power shall possess. Was not the right honorable gentleman establishing a principle which would make it the interest of all India to act against us? Was he not attempting to stand forward as such a peacemaker, as the peace of all Europe would make it necessary to exterminate? Mr Sheridan mentioned the conduct of Mr Elliot in Sweden, and having stated what had passed there, he referred the house to the speeches of His Majesty, which had all told them, that our court had continued

to receive the strongest assurances from foreign powers, that there was no danger of our tranquillity being likely to be disturbed; and he desired them to compare what had happened from time to time. With regard to the revolution in France, he did not mean to go into the discussion of that subject; his opinion upon it remained fixed, and would continue the same; but there was one point which all mankind agreed in rejoicing at, as a consequence of the French revolution; and this was, that she could no longer go about intriguing, and setting the rest of the courts of Europe at enmity with each other. Were we, he asked, willing to take up the little, busy, tattling spirit of intrigue, that worst part of the character of France, and run about producing fresh wars and fresh disturbances. He had not thought that any thing could have induced him to lament the loss of French enmity; but if such was to be the case, he should do so most seriously. He had hoped that what had happened in France would have served as a useful lesson, and that we should have had leisure to have improved by studying it.

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## ARMAMENT AGAINST RUSSIA.

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FEBRUARY 29, 1792.

MR SHERIDAN said, that nothing should have induced him at so late an hour to trespass on the almost exhausted patience of the house, but his astonishment at the contemptuous silence of the minister, that consistency of insult, that climax of haughtiness, with which he had treated the house, and now refused to answer on the day of his trial. He had formerly told them, that when the day of discussion came, he would assign the reasons for his conduct. The day of discussion was come, and he was silent. If he thought himself sufficiently defended by those who had undertaken to plead his cause, he was much deceived; for he had involved himself in a labyrinth of difficulties, which had not a path that did not lead to disgrace. If he had any defence to make, it was a secret locked up in his own

breast, neither communicated to his friends, nor imparted to his colleagues. Every succeeding defender confuted the defender that had gone before him.

If they had asked how they should plead his cause, he could not tell. If they maintained that Oczakow was of no consequence, they could not answer his exposing the country to the hazard of war on account of it; if they maintained that it was of consequence to justify an armament, they could not answer his giving it up. If they said that he yielded to the opinion of the house, they must be told that the majority of the house was with him; if they said, that he yielded to the opinion of the public, the opinion of the public was against his arming. On neither side could he escape. If he was wrong in his principle, he ought to be disgraced; if he was right, he ought to be impeached for abandoning it. If, indeed, Russia, commanding a numerous and hardy race of subjects, possessing great extent of territory, without disunion; and accumulation of power without unwieldiness, were to take possession of Constantinople, to occupy the Euxine, the Hammoaze and Catwater, with her fleets, where no European eye could see or examine their force till they poured into the Mediterranean, then he would admit that her power might be dangerous

to this country; but before he admitted that we were to arm to prevent this danger, the minister should prove that it was probable; and if he did this he must stand convicted of a great crime in abandoning an object of so much importance, without laying such information before parliament, as would enable parliament to compare the probability of the danger with the practicability of venting it. An honorable gentleman, whose more than promise of great abilities men of all parties must have rejoiced to hear, had execrated the impolicy of the ministers of Charles the Second, in not opposing the early ambition of Louis XIV. If one side of the minister's defence was well founded, he might live to execrate his impolicy in neglecting to oppose the ambition of Russia, after equipping an armament for the purpose. If his own majority forgave him, the minority readily might. To the latter he had bowed as the organs of the public voice; to the former, he said, in deeds more forcible than words, "I know what stuff my majority is made of, and how little its voice can be called the voice of the public." It was common for him to change his principles, to come forward with propositions on commerce, fortifications and armaments, with "unless these are adopted I cannot be useful as a minister. I can-

not be accountable for the defence of the country, I cannot answer for the balance of Europe. » And the moment they were rejected or abandoned, to congratulate the house on the prosperity of commerce, the security of the nation, and the favorable situation of the European powers. These were charges which he must not be suffered to put upon the house. The minority would bind him to the principle they had opposed, and convict him on it — he had almost said the majority, which he thought they might, but hoped they would not, that they might not be mistaken for the former majority on the same subject.

The honorable gentleman to whose speech he before alluded, had found it necessary, in explaining his system, to take into account the restoration of France, in order to provide us with a proper enemy. If something, he had said, like the old Government should be restored in France, we should then have all the ambition, treachery, and chicanery to deal with, of which he formerly complained. If a free government should be established, we should then have a neighbouring power less likely, indeed, to be at war with us, but much more formidable whenever war should occur. How then ought we to prepare ourselves for meeting the energy and vigor

which a free government might give to France? How but by fortifying our constitution, by recalling it to its true principles, and banishing from it this proud reserve in ministers, which disdained to give information; and this unmeaning confidence in parliament, which could vote money without it. Instead of this we were advised to take up the vices which France was throwing away; we must meddle and interfere in the affairs of other powers; we must have Holland for our ally, and Prussia to protect Holland. That Austria may not attack Prussia, we must excite the Turks against Austria; and to enable the Turks to defend themselves against Russia, we must get Sweden to make war on Russia, — however far we went on, something more was still wanting. Like the earth, supported by an eagle, the eagle by the elephant, the elephant by a tortoise, etc. A support was always wanted for the last supporter. All this we had done; and what had we got by it? — disgrace, contempt, and reprobation.

He would advise the honorable gentleman who traced out this system, to abjure it in time, as neither according with the English constitution, nor the English character. Double dealing might be of service to despotic governments; it might serve a despotic minister, and perhaps be of tem-



porary service to a country ; but the occasional advantage was more than ten times overbalanced by the mischiefs it brought with it. The mere clerks of despotism , in this respect , would be an overmatch for the legislators of a free state. The character of our constitution was manly, frank , and undisguised. He loved to see the minister assimilate his character to that of the constitution. He would love in it those qualities which he himself possessed ; every sympathy of his nature would dispose him to reverence and to cherish them ; and pursuing ostensible objects by direct and honorable means , he would tower, by the natural energy of candor and wisdom , above the miserable props of chicane and cunning. If , instead of this , a minister should assimilate the character of the constitution to his own , his progress might be towering indeed in lofty misery , but it would be bottomed in shallow craft.

The honorable gentleman , whose speech he had more than once quoted , had unguardedly , in the course of his speech , talked of the want of good faith of the emperor. Such language , when speaking of crowned heads , was always improper , because generally unwise , and frequently dangerous. — How did the honorable gentleman know , that we might not soon have occasion to court the Emperor , as we had lately

courted the Empress, of whose breach of faith, a few months since, that house and the country rung again, though now we had changed our minds so much, that her bare word was considered by us a sufficient security for engagements of the most important nature.

He now came, he said, to the papers. He referred to the memorable speech of a worthy magistrate, Mr Brook Watson, whose eloquence was easily remembered, at it was never flippant and unemphatic. He had called on the house to turn their eyes from the S. W. of America to the N. E. of Europe, as the true destination of the armament then preparing. The right honorable gentleman thought proper to deny this account given of the destination, of the fleet, and parliament had been pestered with it in a double sense. He should, from the papers, suppose that they had in truth been treacherous even to Russia, and he quoted a passage, to shew that they held a double language to that court, and pretended to follow up and act upon its system, while in reality they were offering to Russia their good offices, evidently to get themselves out of the dilemma in which they were involved. They prayed only for the free navigation of the Dniester as an *adoucisement*. This was the term made use of as a sweetener, or as a similar term had been once

called, a *dulcifier*, to satisfy the people. The Empress, with a vein of sarcasm, granted them the sweetener, but by making them parties, and, as it were, allies in her new system of armed neutrality; for she made it a stipulation that they should go to the Porte, and demand the same on their part. The entry of the Grand Vizier (Mr Pitt) into the Divan, accompanied by the *Reis Effendi* near him (Mr Dundas), must have been a very curious spectacle.

He thanked his honorable friend for the thought.—What sort of reception, and what sort of dialogue must have taken place!—well, they must have asked him, what glorious terms have you procured with your grand fleet? Have you humbled Russia? Does she tremble at your power? Does she crouch? Have you burnt her fleets for us? Have you demolished Petersburg?—A melancholy No must have been the answer to all these interrogatories. What! does she not repent that she provoked you? But have you made her give up Oczakow? that your sovereign has pledged himself for! No, none of all this. Instead of telling them to be tranquil in their minds, instead of assuring them that the pigeon of Mahomet might perch in safety, and no longer fear that the eagle of Russia would pounce upon the harmless victim—they must say,

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No, none of all this. But we have engaged that if you do not comply with every tittle that she demands of you before we presumed to interfere, we shall abandon you to all the consequences of war.

He challenged the right honorable gentleman with continuing the armament not to produce acquiescence in his demand, but it had its continuance in a deeper cause — from that proud obstinate spirit that would not confess its error. It was kept up, and all the violence of impressing continued, to preserve a haughty appearance of character for himself, when he had sacrificed the dignity of his royal master, and the fleet of England was made to ride in affected pomp, but in truth a disgraceful array at Spithead, exhibiting in novel manœuvres the zig-zag type of his own conduct. He then spoke of the confidence which had been the topic of discussion, and he laid it down as an invariable maxim in the constitution, that no money should be called for, and taken out of the pockets of the people, without stating the positive use to which it was to be applied.

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## ON MR FOX'S MOTION

FOR SENDING A MINISTER TO PARIS, TO TREAT  
WITH THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF  
FRANCE.

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DECEMBER 15, 1791.

MR SHERIDAN began with observing that it had not been his intention to have said a word on the present question, and indeed he had been able to attend only a part of the debate; the substance of the motion had been discussed in the debate of yesterday, and his right honorable friend had given notice, that he should make this motion merely to record on the journals his protest against the proceedings which the house was so weakly running into; and this he (Mr Fox) had done at a time when he deprecated discussion; because, as the house knew, he had not voice to defend his opinion. Gentle-

men on the other side, however, had thought proper to raise their tone upon the confession of the inability of his right honorable friend to defend his arguments; and never since he had sat in parliament had he heard a question so perversely argued, or the mover of it so unjustly treated. This compelled him to trespass on the indulgence of the house, late as the hour was; and he must be excused for paying no respect whatever to the observation of a right honorable gentleman (Mr Burke), that it was improper to bring forward these discussions in the absence of His Majesty's first minister! This was a tender respect to the dignity of office in that right honorable gentleman; but he must be permitted to say, that the representation of the country was indeed placed in a degraded light, if it was to be maintained that the great council of the nation was not, in this momentous crisis, a competent court to discuss the dearest interests of the people, unless the presence of a certain minister of the crown sanctioned their *délibérations*. But on what ground did they regret the absence of the Treasury leader? Had there appeared any want of numbers or ability to compensate for this loss? What exertion that he could have furnished had been unsupplied? Had there been any want of splendid and sonorous declamation to

cover a meagreness of argument? Any want of virulence of invective to supply the place of proof in accusation? Any want of inflammatory appeals to the passions where reason and judgment were unsafe to be resorted to? Unquestionably in all these respects, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had not been missed; in one article indeed they might be justified in regretting his absence. They had been pressed to prove the facts asserted in the King's speech, and in the proclamation; not an atom of information could any present member of the government furnish; doubtless, therefore, the insurrection was a secret deposited in the breast of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he had taken in his pocket all the proofs of the plot to assist his election at Cambridge.

Mr Sheridan then said, that as he certainly should not follow the fury of the right honorable gentleman (Mr Burke) through the fury of his general invective, so neither could he pursue him in that vein of lightness and pleasantry, by which he had contrived to make the gravest hour this country ever saw, appear to be a moment of peculiar mirth and relaxation. He would confine himself to the question, which he thought lay in a very narrow compass. His honorable friend had recommended, that before we plun-

ged into a war, and drew upon the treasure and blood of the people of Great Britain, we should try, if possible, to settle the matter in dispute by negotiation, and shew to the people that we had so tried. This his right honorable friend had recommended as a duty which we owed to our constituents, be the character and principles of the power with whom we are disputing what they may. Was it credible that a proposition of this nature should have been received with such heat? Reason and duty at any other time must have supported it. But the fact was, that the moment was unfortunate; the time was full of heat and irritation; natural and artificial government had thought it their interest to inflame this indisposition. Intelligence was expected of a catastrophe in France, which all humane hearts deprecated, and would equally deplore; in this temper, therefore, the public mind was worked up to a blind and furious hostility against France; and the dearest interests of our own country were to be risked at the call of a momentary enthusiasm, which, if not bottomed in sound policy and sound sense, was sure not to be lasting. Could there be a stronger proof of this temper, than the manner in which an honorable and learned member (Mr Grant) had supported his argument. The



most successful passage in his able speech, turned upon a passionate appeal to the pride and dignity of the English nation. He thinks proper to assume, that any thing like negotiation at present, would be a petition for mercy and forbearance from the French nation: and then he triumphantly exclaimed, with a triumphant cry, acknowledging the excellence of his argument, "Draw your petition, and where is the man, with a British heart within his bosom, who will sign it!" What unfairness is this! said Mr Sheridan; and how can a man of his abilities stoop to a trick of argument which he must despise. Petition! ridiculous! Was there no mode between nations of demanding explanation for an injury given or meditated, but by petition? Did we petition the court of Spain in the affair of Nootka Sound? Did we petition France in the dispute respecting this very Holland in 1787? Or did the learned gentleman believe that, notwithstanding these instances, there was something so peculiarly meek, pliant, and bending in the character of the first minister, that it was quite impossible for him to assume a lofty tone or a haughty air for any purpose? The case of Russia, however, Mr Sheridan ridiculed and excepted. To judge by that alone, he admitted that the learned gentleman

might be justified in apprehending that every menace of this government was to end in an act of meanness; that, whenever he saw the minister in the attitude of threatening, he might expect to see him in the act of conceding; and that, if he armed, it was in order to petition for mercy. Without this inference from the past conduct of the administration, the general argument was idle, and all the proud acclamations it had produced were wholly thrown away.

Mr Sheridan next adverted to the declaration of Mr Windham, that as he was of opinion that moral propriety prohibited our treating or having any intercourse with France, he had rather, if it ever took place, that it should be matter of necessity, and not of choice. This Mr Sheridan treated as a sentiment not consistent with the usual precision of understanding which characterized that honorable gentleman. It was admitted that some time or other we must treat with the French, for eternal war or the extirpation of the nation was not yet avowed by any one. Necessity then was to be looked to, to give us a moral excuse, and whence was that necessity to arrive? from defeat, from discomfiture, from shame and disgrace. Happy prospect to look to, which would excuse us, as it did the Duke of Saxe Teschen in his glorious retreat, from the conta-

mination of treating with this nation of robbers and murderers, as they are styled. Happy, dignified opportunity to treat, when we should be completely at their mercy. Unquestionably we should then be justified, and certainly we should be undone: but the honorable gentleman argued as if this case of necessity, through defeat, could alone justify us in negotiating with such a foe; what! did he not perceive that an equal necessity might arise from our success? We went to war for a specific object — the minister avowed and explained that object.

Admit that we are victorious and obtain it — is not the war to cease when the object of it is obtained? And if to cease, how but by some intercourse or agreement of some sort or other? Here there would be a situation in which negotiation must arise, not from necessity and defeat, but from victory and justice, all nicety and strained morality, and meek dignity, therefore about the thing itself was trifling; and as to waiting that time might operate, he did not conceive that if that time was to be spent in war and blows, much advance would be made in the spirit of conciliation. In stating the question this way, Mr Sheridan said, he argued on the declared grounds which His Majesty's speech and the ministers gave for the war; for if he were to

argue on the ground on which the war was urged with such impassioned and popular eloquence by other gentlemen, in that case he must despair of ever seeing peace return to the earth. With them was the motive to keep faith with our allies? Was the object to preserve Holland? Or to resent the incendiary decree of the National Convention? — Nothing like it through all their speeches; they scarcely deigned to mention such little and limited purposes. No — their declared object was to avenge all the outrages which have been committed in France, to reinstate, if possible, all that has been overthrown, to exterminate the principles and the people who preach the principles which they reprobate. As Philip demanded the orators of Athens to be delivered up to him as his most formidable enemies, these gentlemen must have all the democratic metaphysicians of France extirpated, or they cannot sleep in their beds. In short, the whole bearing of the arguments and instigations they used to rouse the house to hostility, went to advise a war which never was to cease, but in the total overthrow of the French republic, and the extermination of all who had supported it. Was the house, was the country ready to vote a war for such an object, and on such principles? We were told that we must not differ with the

allied powers, with whom we were in future to co-operate. Were we then to make a common cause in the principles, and for the purposes for which these despots associated? Were the free and generous people of England ready to subscribe to the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto? That hateful outrage on the rights and feelings of human nature; that wretched issue of impotent pride, folly and humanity; that proclamation which had steeled the heart and maddened the brain of all France; which had provoked those it had devoted to practise all the cruelties it had impotently threatened to inflict, which had sharpened the daggers of the assassins of the 2d of September, which had whetted the axe now suspended over the unfortunate monarch; — was the nation ready to subscribe to this absurd and detestable rhapsody? An honorable officer (Sir James Murray) had attempted to defend this performance, — but how? By denying that it intended what it professed and threatened. From a British officer of his character and understanding, a different defence might be expected, the honorable baronet had given instances where the conduct of the Prussian army contradicted the spirit of their manifesto; — what instances. on the contrary side, might be adduced, he would not then discuss. One case.

alone had been sufficient to decide him as to the true spirit of the league. The brutal rigour with which La Fayette had been treated: whatever else he was, he was a brave man, and he was in their power. The use they had made of that power sufficiently shewed how they would have treated others, whom they might well consider as entitled to ten-fold enmity. The worthy baronet, concluded Mr Sheridan, thinks they never meant to carry their proclamation into execution; I thank God they never had the opportunity. He proceeded to reprobate the idea of Great Britain engaging in the war on the principles of the allies; and yet how difficult was it to co-operate in their efforts, yet disconnect their motives and their ends! This was a serious consideration for parliament. The question was not merely whether we should go to war or not, but on what principles, to what end, and pledged to what confederacy we should go to war. For his part, he had declared, and, he hoped, with sufficient frankness and fairness, that, if war must be, the defence of the country and its constitution would be the single consideration in his mind! And for that purpose he would support the executive government, in whatever hands His Majesty placed it. But in this declaration he referred to a war undertaken on the

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necessity, and directed to the objects stated by His Majesty and his ministers. He did not refer to the crusade of chastisement and vengeance, which the zeal of some gentlemen recommended, and the clamor of the house seemed so ready to adopt. He would never consent that one English guinea should be spent, or one drop of British blood be shed, to restore the ancient despotism of France — that bitterest foe that England ever knew. Sooner than support such objects, or such a project, he would rather violate the proud feelings which he shared in common with the house, and petition for peace, with any concession, and almost by any sacrifice; but he trusted no such dilemma impended. The real object of the war was one thing — the fiery declaration which was to whet our valour was another. Mr Sheridan now adverted to the strange situation in which the house might bring itself, by indulging and encouraging this furious spirit of declamation, against the meanness and infamy of holding any sort of treaty and intercourse with France. It was in the first place a libel on His Majesty's speech, and upon our own address. His Majesty had encouraged us to hope, that notwithstanding his armament, he might yet procure to us the blessing of peace: and we have thanked and encouraged him in his gracious in-

tention. How was this to be achieved? Disputes, and cause of complaint existing, without some sort of communication, it was impossible. How was this to be carried on — was there any sort of dumb crambo, by which the parties might come to understand each other; and yet the form of negotiation be slipt from, and the moral dignity of Great Britain be preserved?

A right honorable gentleman, indeed, (Mr Burke) had warned the house to be tender of advising His Majesty in the exercise of his prerogative; yet he himself had actually usurped the first prerogative of the crown; and in contradiction to the King's express declaration, declared the nation to be actually at war; but what was to be said, if, after all this, the Minister, when returning to his seat in the house, should bring us the happy intelligence, that in consequence of explanation and treaty, the calamities of war were actually averted! Mr Sheridan asserted peremptorily, that at the very moment in which the house was urged to a flame at the idea of our stooping to the contamination of treating with France, the minister was actually negotiating, not only through Holland, but directly with agents from the French executive council. Should his efforts be successful, observe how you must treat him on his return:



.. if he should tell you that a temperate explanation has taken place; that the French had abandoned all idea of attacking our ally; that they have rescinded the incendiary decrees and declarations which had countenanced the disaffected in England, and that this peaceful and prosperous country might return to that state of applauded neutrality which we have just thanked His Majesty for adhering to, this we must answer, « go, thou mean wretch, thou betrayer of the pride and dignity of the crown and of the nation, thou contaminated man, debased by intercourse with the agents of robbers, ruffians, murderers, and atheists — we only dissembled when we applauded your neutrality, we detest your peace, and we meant to dupe our sovereign when we called on him to preserve it. » Would the house make this answer, should such happy intelligence be brought them, and will they own that they played the hypocrite in their address to their King? Mr Sheridan next took notice of the argument of the inutility of any negotiation, the French having ordered Dumourier to open the Scheldt. He stated the dates, by which it appeared that that order was given before our declaration, that we would support the States-General, could have been known in Paris. Why had no representation been made to France on

that subject? A similar circumstance had occurred in 1785, when the Emperor seized the Scheldt. The determination of the French to support the Dutch, their then ally, was subsequently made known to him; negociation ensued, and he abandoned his project. Lastly, Mr Sheridan stated the various grounds on which he thought if war must be the event, that preparations should be instant and vigorous. He then took notice of the sneer of an honorable gentleman, when he asked whether his right honorable friend (Mr Fox) would be the ambassador to Paris? He declared, that from the commencement of the revolution, he had been of opinion that if there had been a statesman-like administration, they would have considered the post of minister at Paris as the situation which demanded the first and ablest talents of the country. Happy, he believed, it would have been for both countries, and for human nature itself, if such had been the opinion of government in this country; and highly as he valued his right honorable friend, unparalleled as he thought his talents were, he should not have hesitated to have declared, that as minister in Paris there was scope and interest for the greatest mind that ever warmed a human bosom. The French had been uniformly partial, and

even prejudiced in favor of the English. What manly sense, what generous feeling, communicating with them, might have done; and above all, what fair truth and plain dealing might have effected, he believed it was not easy to calculate; but the withholding all these from that nation in our hollow neutrality, he was sure, was an error which would be for ever to be lamented. He concluded, with a reference to Lord Sheffield's declaration, that he was ashamed of the enthusiasm that he had once felt for Mr Fox. This declaration he treated with the indignant zeal which friendship demanded. The according chorus of the noble band, who, in spite of the efforts of clamor and power, have surrounded the standard of the champion of the constitution, testified how little they valued the desertion of this noble lord.

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# ADDRESS

## ON THE WAR WITH FRANCE.

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FEBRUARY 12, 1793.

Mr SHERIDAN began with saying, that in one circumstance alone in the present debate, he felt himself actuated by feelings and motives similar to those professed by the honorable member (Mr Burke). The honorable gentleman had declared that he did not speak to support the Minister, for his case had been so perfectly made out by himself that it needed no support; but that he rose solely to repel the insinuations and charges of his right honorable friend (Mr Fox), so he could sincerely declare that he had no thoughts of attempting to give additional weight to the arguments by which his right honorable friend had, in his judgment, refuted those of the Minister. He was provoked to rise solely by the insinuations and charges of the last speaker

against his right honorable friend. Never had he before indulged himself in such a latitude of ungoverned bitterness and spleen, towards the man he still occasionally professed so much to respect. His ridicule of the smallness of the number of friends, left to the object of his persecution, ill became him of all mankind ; but, he trusted, that however small that number was, there ever would be found among them, men not afraid upon such a subject to oppose truth and temper, to passion and declamation, however eloquently urged, or however clamorously applauded.

They were styled by the honorable gentleman a phalanx, and he styled the amendment of his right honorable friend a stratagem to keep this phalanx together, who had been otherwise, it seems, endeavoring to make up for the smallness of their numbers by the contrariety of their opinions ; an odd description of a phalanx ; no, he would never have given them that appellation, if he had not known the contrary of this to be the truth. He knew well their title to the character he had given them, and that a phalanx, whatever its extent, must consist of a united band, acting in a body, animated by one soul, and pursuing its object with identity of spirit, and unity of effort. His right honorable friend's purpose then, in this amendment, must

have been, as he had stated it himself, to reconcile those differences of opinion in other quarters to which he had expressly alluded, and not those which existed no where but in the imagination of the man who he believed had at least exhausted all power of splitting or dividing farther. But what suggested to him it must be a stratagem of his right honorable friend? Was he a man prone to stratagems? At any other time he would trust to his candor even for an answer — for if ever there was a man who disdained stratagems by nature, who knew to distinguish between craft and wisdom, between crookedness and policy, who loved the straight path, and sometimes even without looking to the end, because it was straight, it was the very person whom he now arraigns for craft and trick.

The next object of his sarcasm was, his right honorable friend's complaining of being so often misrepresented — "Pity," says the honorable member, "that a gentleman who expresses himself so clearly, and who repeats so much, should be so liable to be misapprehended." A pity, certainly, but not much to be wondered at, when misapprehension was wilful, and misrepresentation useful. The honorable member had only mistaken his own facility in pervert-

ing, for his antagonist's difficulty in explaining. But another grievance was, that, however misunderstood in that house, these same speeches were detailed with great distinctness and care in the public prints, while those of an honorable friend near him (Mr Windham) were, as he declared, perfectly mangled and misrepresented. — There was no stratagem to be sure in this insinuation, but was there much candor in it? Did any one living know better than he who made the insinuation, that nothing could exceed the carelessness of his honorable friend (Mr Fox) to the representation of his speeches out of doors? He believed he had never seen, touched, revised, or printed, a single line he had spoken in parliament in his life, or caused it to be done for him. If either friends or judicious editors were the more attentive to the task, he thought they did credit to themselves, and an important service to the public at large: not less candid was it to insinuate a purposed misrepresentation of another member's (Mr Windham) speeches. He claimed as long and as intimate a friendship with that gentleman as the right honorable member who appeared so tremblingly alive for his fame; he thought equally high of him in many respects; but he must in the frankness of friendship take the liberty of

saying, that though no man had more information to ground argument upon, more wit to adorn that argument, or logic to support it; yet that the faculty, which had been rather sneered at in his right honorable friend, namely, that of rendering himself perfectly perspicuous and intelligible to every capacity, was not the distinguished characteristic of that gentleman's eloquence. He was apt sometimes to spin a little too fine; and, therefore it was possible, without any corrupt partiality on the part of the reporters of the debates, that his right honorable friend's (Mr Fox) speeches might be given with a superior degree of perspicuity.

He now proceeded to discuss Mr Burke's other attacks on Mr Fox; he was charged with a dereliction of principle in having that day omitted to express his apprehension of the increase of French power, be the French government what it may; certainly Mr Fox had not said one word upon that subject in his speech that day, but had he not in every one of his previous speeches in this session distinctly and most forcibly avowed and urged [his sentiments on that head? How pleasant to observe a gentleman, who begins his speech with taunting his right honorable friend for repeating things too often, reproach him in the next sentence for avoiding a



repetition the most unnecessary he could have fallen into! But if the reproach was on that ground extraordinary, it was still more extraordinary that the general observation itself should come from the quarter from which it proceeded! A dread of France it seemed ought to be a fundamental principle in the mind of a British statesman; no alteration in her government can change this principle or ought to suspend this apprehension, and who was the gentleman so tenacious of this creed? The only man in all England who had held the directly contrary doctrine! Had he or could we have forgot that in his very first contemptuous revilings at their revolution, only in the last session of parliament, he had expressly scorned and insulted them as a nation extinguished for ever, and to be feared no more, and all in consequence of the change in her government; that he described the country as a gap and chasm in Europe. Their principles had done more, said he, than a thousand fields like Blenheim or Ramillies could have effected against them; had they even got power by their crimes, like the usurpation of Cromwell, he could have respected or feared them at least, but they were blotted out of the European map of power for ever! And the historian had only to record "*Gallus olim bello floruisse*" yet this

very gentleman, said Mr Sheridan, having last year expressed all this with as much heat as he had this year expressed the contrary sentiment, arraigns my right honorable friend for having omitted to re-echo for a single hour his unalterable apprehensions of the power of France, be the changes of its government what they may.

It was still more curious to observe the manner of attempting to charge this circumstance on his right honorable friend. A book was produced, and he was proceeding to read a former speech of his (Mr Fox's), as if he had ever once retracted his opinion on this subject. When the Speaker called him to order, the honorable gentleman did not seem to take the interruption kindly, though certainly he ought to have been grateful for it; for never, sure, was man, who had a greater interest in discouraging the practice of contrasting the past and present speeches, principles, and professions of any public man. Was the honorable gentleman ready to invite such a discussion respecting himself? If he were, and his consistency could be matter of regular question in that house, he did not scruple to assert that there was scarcely an *iota* of his new principles to which there was not a recorded contradiction in his former professions. Let a set of his works be produced, one member might

read, paragraph by paragraph, his present doctrines, and another should refute every syllable of them out of the preceding ones; it was a consolation to those who differed from his new principles to know where to resort for the best antidote to them.

His next accusation against the mover of the amendment was, that he should have put the question on so mean an issue, as whether the actual hostile overt-acts committed by France, had been sufficiently explained and disowned to this country. This it seemed was contemptible; it was a war against the principles of the French government we were to engage in and not on account of their petty aggressions against us; and, therefore, it followed, that it was to be a war to exterminate either them or their principles. The doctrine he thought both wild and detestable; but, admitting that it was right, the honorable gentleman must yet extend his scorn and his rebuke to the Minister, as well as to Mr Fox; for though they differed in their conclusion, they had discussed the grounds of the war precisely on the same principle and footing. The honorable gentleman (Mr Burke) differed equally from both, or more rather from the Minister, with respect to the professed motives and objects of the war, than from those

who opposed the war. In this view he thought it most unmanly and unwarranted in the Minister to sit still and listen to these inflammatory rants, and even to cheer the war song of this honorable gentleman,

——— quo non præstantior ullus,  
Ære ciers viros martemque accendere cantis.

Vras.

when at the same moment he knew, and had even just declared, that the war was undertaken upon principles, and for purposes diametrically opposite to those upon which he suffered the house to be heated and misled by a spirit of vengeance and quixotism, which it was his duty to oppose and restrain.

With the same persevering purpose of inflaming and misleading, the honorable gentleman had read so much from the cruel and unjust proceedings against the late unfortunate monarch, and from various other French publications. This habit of picking out all the hot, wrong-headed, and disgusting things, said or written by individuals in France, would never be so constantly resorted to for a fair purpose. The compilation on this principle, avowed by the Treasury, and so often quoted by the honorable member, was

an unworthy expedient, particularly as it had been done at a time when we still professed our hope and desire for peace. — What, if a conduct like this had been pursued in France? If, when the convention came to deliberate on war and peace, and to decide on the provocations alleged to have been given by our government, pamphlets had been given to the members at the door of the convention, containing extracts from all the various speeches of that right honorable gentleman since the first revolution — containing, in appearance, every thing that the scorn of pride, the frenzy of passion, and the bitterness of malice could have urged against them, from the very outset; and assuming the applause of his hearers to be the will of the government, and to speak the voice of the people? If to these had been added every furious and indecent paragraph that had appeared in our publications, and especially in prints connected with administration, what would have been our opinion of such a proceeding at such a time? And what our indignation, if we learned that this had not been a work hatched in the dens and caverns of savage murderers and foes to peace; but that it had been produced under the direction of the executive council itself, and at the very moment that they were professing their

desire of avoiding hostilities with us , and of promoting a good understanding ? The honorable member would have been among the first to have quoted such a conduct in them, as a new proof of mean hypocrisy and determined malice.

The address and toasts of an idle dinner of English and others, at White's, in Paris, was the next subject of the honorable member's alarm and invective. And to aggravate the horror of this meeting, the house was assured, that at it were drank the healths of Mr Fox and Mr Sheridan. The insinuation was scarcely worth noticing, nor should he have adverted to it, but just to shew how well entitled the honorable gentleman was to the credit he claimed for the accuracy of his facts and information. This anecdote wanted only one little ingredient to produce possibly some effect, namely, fact. The truth was, that neither his nor Mr Fox's health were drank at that meeting ; and it was a little unlucky that the honorable gentleman, who ransacked every corner of every French paper for any thing that would make for his purpose, should have overlooked a formal contradiction of such toasts having been given, inserted by authority in the *Patriot François* ; and it was the more unlucky, as the purpose of bringing forward this important anecdote, was evidently to insinuate

that they were in Paris at least considered as republicans; while the actual reason given for not drinking their healths was, that, though friends to the reform of abuses, they were considered as expressly against all idea of revolution in England, and known to be attached to the form of the existing constitution.

The next specimen of the honorable member's extreme nicety with respect to facts, was the manner in which he proved the enormous ambition of France, by the convention's having adopted a proposition of the Minister of Justice (Danton), that the future boundaries should be the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the ocean; and great stress was laid upon this proposal having been made by a person of such rank in the state. Now for the fact — Danton was not the minister of justice, and the proposition was not adopted by the convention. The right honorable gentleman might have recollected, that if Danton had been minister of justice, he could not have been a member of the convention; and he ought also to have known, that the proposition, so far from having been adopted, was scarcely attended to. But the ambition of France, and her aggressions against this country, were not, according to the honorable member, the only causes of war. — Religion demanded

that we should avenge her cause. Atheism was avowed and professed in France. As an argument to the feelings and passions of men, Mr Sheridan said, that the honorable member had great advantages in dwelling on this topic; because it was a subject upon which those who disliked every thing that had the air of cant and profession on the one hand, or of indifference on the other, found it awkward to meddle with. Establishments, tests, and matters of that nature, were proper objects of political discussion in that house; but not general charges of Deism or Atheism, as pressed to their consideration by the honorable gentleman; thus far he would say, and it was an opinion he had never changed or concealed, that although no man can command his conviction, he had ever considered a deliberate disposition to make proselytes in infidelity as an unaccountable depravity of heart. Whoever attempted to pluck the belief or the prejudice on this subject, style it which he would, from the bosom of one man, woman, or child, committed a brutal outrage, the motive for which he had never been able to trace or conceive. But on what ground was all this infidelity and atheism to be laid to the account of the revolution? The philosophers had corrupted and perverted the minds of the people; but when



did the precepts or perversions of philosophy ever begin their effect on the root of the tree, and afterwards rise to the towering branches? Were the common and ignorant people ever the first disciples of philosophy, and did they make proselytes of the higher and more enlightened orders? He contended, that the general atheism of France was, in the first place, no honor to the exertions of the higher orders of the clergy against the philosophers; and, in the next place, that it was notorious that all the men and women of rank and fashion in France, including possibly all the present emigrant nobility, whose piety the honorable gentleman seemed to contrast with republican infidelity, were the genuine and zealous followers of Voltaire and Rousseau; and if the lower orders had been afterwards perverted, it was by their precept and example. The atheism, therefore, of the new system, as opposed to the piety of the old, was one of the weakest arguments he had yet heard in favor of this mad political and religious crusade.

Mr Sheridan now adverted to Mr Burke's regret, that we had not already formed an alliance with the Emperor, and to Mr Dundas's declaration, that he hoped that we should ally with every power in Europe against the French;

this appeared to him to contradict Mr Pitt's declaration, and it was the most unpleasant intelligence that he had heard that day. If we made such alliances, our principles and our purposes would soon become the same; we took the field against the excesses and licentiousness of liberty, they against liberty itself. The effect of a real co-operation would be a more fatal revolution than even prejudice could paint that of France — a revolution in the political morals of England, and in consequence, the downfall of that freedom which was the true foundation of the power, the prosperity, and the glory of the British nation. Sooner than entwine ourselves in such alliances, and pledge the treasure and blood of the country to such purposes, he had almost said, he had rather see England fight France single-handed. He feared the enemy less than our allies. He disliked the cause of war, but abhorred the company we were to fight in still more. He had a claim to call on the right honorable gentleman to join him in these principles: who were these allies, and what had been their conduct? Had he (Mr Burke) forgot his character of the Polish revolution? « That glorious event had bettered the condition of every man there, from the prince to the peasant, which had rescued millions, not from po-

litical slavery, but from actual chains, and even personal bondage. » — Who had marred this lovely prospect, and massacred the fairest offspring of virtue, truth and valour? Who had hypocritically first approved the revolution and its purpose, and had now marched troops to stifle the groans of those who dared even to murmur at its destruction? These allies, these chosen and bosom counsellors in the future efforts of this deluded nation. Could the right honorable gentleman palliate these things? No. But had he ever arraigned them? Why had he never come to brandish in that house a Russian dagger, red in the heart's blood of the free constitution of Poland? No; not a word, not a sigh, not an ejaculation for the destruction of all he had held up to the world as a model for reverence and imitation! In his heart is a record of brass for every error and excess of liberty, but on his tongue is a sponge to blot out the foulest crimes and blackest treacheries of despotism.

Mr Sheridan next argued on an observation of an honorable member's (Mr Percy Windham), who had said, that we refused to make any allowance for the novelty of the situation in which France stood after the destruction of its old arbitrary government. This Mr Sheridan pressed very forcibly; insisting that it was a mean

and narrow way of viewing the subject, to ascribe the various outrages in France to any other cause than this unalterable truth, that a despotic government degrades and depraves human nature, and renders its subjects, on the first recovery of their rights, unfit for the exercise of them. But was the inference to be, that those who had been long slaves, ought therefore to remain so for ever, because, in the first wildness and strangeness of liberty, they would probably dash their broken chains almost to the present injury of themselves, and of all those who were near them? No; the lesson ought to be a tenfold horror of the despotism, which had so profaned and changed the nature of social men; and a more jealous apprehension of withholding rights and liberty from our fellow-creatures; because, in so doing, we risked and became responsible for the bitter consequences: for, after all, no precautions of fraud or of craft, can suppress or alter this eternal truth, that liberty is the birth-right of man, and whatever opposes his possession is a sacrilegious usurpation. Mr Sheridan concluded with advertising to the evident intention of the minister to render unanimity impossible, but said he should never retract his former declaration; that the war once entered into, he should look to nothing

**PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES. 133**

but the defence of the country and its interests,  
and therefore give it a sincere and steady support.

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# MOTION

RELATIVE TO THE EXISTENCE OF SEDITIOUS  
PRACTICES IN THIS COUNTRY,

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MARCH 4, 1793.

Mr SHERIDAN said, he begged a thousand pardons for having kept the house waiting so long; but he understood that the house was to be occupied in receiving excuses from members for absence on the day of call, and that the business would not be over until after six o'clock. He had been stopped too on his way by upwards of fifty petitions, which had been put into his hands, from the royal burghs of Scotland, respecting their internal government, and he should beg leave to present them to-morrow, and he hoped for the attendance of the house, and particularly that of the right honorable gentleman (Mr Dundas), who had such a share in the former discussions upon that subject. He should

now proceed to the subject of the motion which he intended presently to submit to the house, the object of which would be to appoint a committee to inquire into the truth of the reports of sedition in this country — reports, whatever some might think of them, he was sure were calamitous in their effects to this country, and might become more so, if not checked in time. He should not attempt to prove, in this place, that there never existed any sufficient reason for apprehending the danger of the sedition, or that there had not been any act of insurrection in any part of the kingdom, to warrant the propagation of such reports: it was well known that there never was any thing of that sort of consequence enough to merit the description which had been given of it, or to create the alarm which followed; at least that was the opinion he had formed upon the subject. However, he perhaps might be obliged to retract that opinion in consequence of the proofs that might be brought forward before the committee of inquiry, for which he intended to move; if that should happen to be the case, he should be glad to see that ministers had only done their duty in spreading an alarm at a time of real danger, and should be glad to praise them for their vigilance, however he might deplore the necessity that gave it

birth. When he said he should move for a committee to inquire into those things, he did not wish to say any thing upon the effect of such inquiry at present; his object was to know in what situation this country really was, and also to know whether the language made use of by His Majesty's ministers upon the subject of sedition, conspiracy, and treason, was not at least premature at the time it was uttered, and consequently, that nothing had happened in this country that could justify government in the steps they had taken, and the proceedings they instituted; at present, however, he had the satisfaction, as he really believed the house had, of thinking that these reports were ill founded: to remove all doubt, however, upon that subject, and to obtain complete information, were the objects of his motion. Parliament met early in December last, and they were called together in a very extraordinary manner; this of itself was matter of alarm to the country; for they naturally concluded that it would not have been so assembled, had there not been strong reasons for it. We were then under the apprehension of a foreign war. From that very moment parliament seemed so taken up with that object, that they lost all curiosity with respect to the internal situation of this country:



they took it for granted that every thing that was said by ministers was true upon the subject of sedition lurking in the country at the beginning of the session : they took it for granted , too , that every step taken to check it was just : this was a fraud upon the public , and the house ought to feel it so , for he really and in his conscience believed , that the alarm was spread for the express purpose of diverting the attention of the public for a while , and afterwards leading them the more easily into a war. He must now beg leave to observe upon the nature of the confidence which that house should place in the assertion of the King's ministers at any time , more especially when they were about to involve the country in the calamities of war and of the effect of extending that confidence. When ministers came to that house , and called upon it to strengthen the hands of government , they were always bound to explain to that house the real motives they had for asking for that assistance , in order that the house of commons , as the representatives of the people , might be able to tell that people , whose lives and money were to be expended , the reasons why they were to be deprived of the rights they had before enjoyed ; for he would maintain it as a maxim , that to strengthen the hands of government was neces-

sarily, for a time, to weaken the rights of the people; and he would follow that observation up, that to strengthen the hands of government in carrying on a foreign war, without informing the people of the real state of our country, was making mere machines of them, was a conspiracy against the constitution, and was laying down a plan by which their liberty might be lost for ever.

With respect to the late supposed sedition in this kingdom, and of that supposed temper for insurrection, and of the lurking treason of which we heard so much by hints and conjectures, there were three circumstances to be considered, and three points of view in which the subject might be placed. The first was, that the danger in this country had been real: secondly, that the danger was not real, but that the whole was a false alarm, really entertained by government, the effect of a delusion successfully practised upon them: in which case the propagation, on their part, although unfortunate, was yet honest. The third was, that the whole was founded on a systematic plan, laid by government for deluding the sense, and finally subduing the spirit of the people. It was, in his opinion, the duty of parliament to regard the subject in either of these three points of view; but

he could not perceive any other in which it could be properly regarded ; and he saw in all of them no way of proceeding with propriety but by instituting a committee of inquiry. Let us suppose , for instance , the whole evil was really felt as ministers had described at the beginning of the session. What then would follow ? Most certainly the adoption of a committee of inquiry , in order that a plan should be laid for our future safety. What was the next thing to be attended to , and the next view of the subject , supposing that ministers really apprehended danger , although in truth there had not existed any ? Most certainly that a committee should be appointed to inquire , and that they might make their report upon the situation of the country , announce it to be in a state of safety , and calm the apprehensions of the public. In the third point of view , that supposing the whole to be a mere device on the part of government , for the purpose of leading the people more easily to a war with France , by persuading them that there are at this moment many agents in France , who are doing every thing they can to disturb the peace and internal tranquillity of this country ; again he must say , that a committee should be appointed to inquire , in order that the public should know the deception which had been

practised on them; and that if the war had been so commenced, the people should be enabled to employ the means of declaring to the throne their sentiments upon that subject.

Mr Sheridan observed, that we were at war with a great, a powerful, and hitherto victorious republic — it was idle to conceal the truth — and he added, that there was not in that house, or in this country, any man who wished more sincerely than he did that we might be able to check them in their career; at the same time he certainly characterized them aright at present. He then came to the accounts which had been given, or rather the hints which had been thrown out by His Majesty's Attorney-General at the beginning of the present session of parliament, concerning the plots and conspiracies that were said to be formed in this country; but had any thing of this been proved? Not a syllable. But this made part of the system adopted by government; and the public were to be alarmed at the apprehension of the progress of French principles, in order that they might the more readily be induced to go to war with the French; and by the conduct of the worthy gentlemen of the associations the people of this country were called upon to revile the French in expressions, and to fol-

low their system in practice, namely, to establish a government by clubs. He wished the house to reflect on what was likely to be the result of all this. The people of this country were accused of a spirit of disaffection; many plots and conspiracies were said to be hatched; and now he, in his conscience, believed there was not an iota of truth in any part of the charge to justify the apprehension which government expressed at the commencement of the session. What was to be done? Institute a committee of inquiry; for if there was any of this treason or conspiracy lurking any where, all he could say was, that it remained at this hour as undiscovered at as the first moment when it was apprehended to be formed. These associations were formed, as it was said, for the protection of persons and property against republicans and levellers; and what were they about to do, and what in fact had they been doing? First of all they had been employed to prevent the circulation of Mr Paine's book, and the Jockey Club, and to bring to punishment the distributors of those publications — works which had for many months been spread all over the country by the connivance, as he might say, of His Majesty's ministers, and this too when one of those very ministers had an opportunity of re-

flecting on the impropriety of such publications , who had himself formerly indulged a disposition not to treat the high powers of this country with that respect which was due, and had , no doubt, repented of that temper, and thoroughly changed his sentiments. What care I for the King's birth-day — what is the King's birth-day to me ? or some such coarse expression , had , he believed , been uttered by a noble duke some time since. What , he asked , had appeared of late to justify our dreadful apprehensions ? He was not sure that ministers felt any alarm at the time that they were endeavoring to alarm the country ; for how did the Chancellor of the Exchequer act ? In the course of the summer he proceeded with due solemnity to take the weight on himself of the laborious office of Warden of the Cinque Ports, and he conducted himself in that situation in a manner equally pleasing to his hosts and to his guests, and returned to town without any great apprehension of danger ; but as the meeting of parliament approached, things became more alarming, until at last the whole country was said to be threatened with destruction. The whole of this was a panic created by ministers, for the purpose to which he had alluded before ; this he felt no difficulty in saying , and he called on ministers

to deny it: he was so well convinced of the truth of it, that he would venture to affirm, that if all the magistrates appointed under the new police bill were to appear at the bar of that house, they would not be able to give one instance of the existence of that sedition which ministers had so often adverted to in calling upon the house to support them. All he requested of the house was, that a committee of enquiry should be appointed, or of ministers, if they said that such a committee was unnecessary, to confess that they themselves had been deceived upon the subject, and that what they advanced upon that topic some time since, they were now ready to retract. This, he said, was due to the public; for the people of this country ought not to be practised upon by fraud; they were a generous and a brave people; and he believed that if this country were to be invaded by a foreign enemy, it would only increase our energy and stimulate our exertion. He must therefore say, that, to accuse them of seditious motives, was highly unjust, as well as indecent. This panic had already had a great effect; and, indeed, it was much too general an impression to proceed from real danger; a general panic was always created by phantoms and imaginary evils. It had been always so in the panics of armies; for instance,

he believed that there was not once to be found in history an instance in which the panic of an army had proceeded from real danger; it had always proceeded either from accident or some stratagem of the enemy. Indeed the thing bore evidence for itself; had the danger been real, there must have been a difference of opinion as to the amount of it; for while there was a difference in the size and character of the understandings of men, there must be a difference in their opinions; but those who believed any thing upon the tales of sedition, which he had before alluded to, believed every thing that was said about it, and that of itself its fallacy. There were numerous instances recorded, both in prose and verse, where nations had been misled and had acted upon such false alarms. There were many instances in which a panic had been communicated by one class of men to the other.

——— *Sic quisque pavendo*

*Dat vires famæ: nulloque auctore malorum*

*Quæ finxere, timent. Nec solum vulgus inani*

*Percussum terrore pavet: sed curia, et ipsi*

*Sedibus exilucere patres, invisaque belli*

*Consulibus fugiens mandat decreta senatus.*

His friend (Mr Windham) had been panic-struck, and now strengthened the hand of go-



vernment, who, last session, agreeable to a vulgar adage, « Rolled His Majesty's ministers in the dirt. » At that period he would pull off the mask of perfidy, and declaimed loudly against that implicit confidence which some had argued ought to be placed in ministers. He now thought such arguments were impolitic, and no man was more strenuous for that confidence which he had before with so much warmth reprobated. Another friend, Mr Burke, to whose doctrines Mr Windham had become a convert, had also been panic-struck. He had been so affected, that he saw nothing but a black and clouded sky; a bleak opposition, where there was not a shrub or bush to shelter him from the gloomy aspect of public affairs; but he had taken refuge in the ministerial gaberdine, where he hoped for security from the approaching storm.

He had now dismissed the two first parts of the subject, and he therefore came to the question, whether ministers had spread those alarms, for purposes which they did not avow? It would be with great reluctance that he should put that construction upon their conduct; but there had been such encouragement given to reports of a certain nature, that he hardly knew how to avoid saying, that these alarms were created

for very dangerous purposes ; indeed he could not refrain from saying , that there appeared on the part of His Majesty's ministers , first, a desire to inflame the minds of the people to prepare them to go to war with France ; secondly, an inclination to divert the public mind from the question of parliamentary reform, for the purpose of concealing the apostacy of certain individuals, who do not chuse to be put to the test, and tried by the public upon the standard of their own professions. As to the first of these points, namely, that of inflaming the minds of the people of this country, in order to prepare them for a war with France, Mr Sheridan said, he need only refer to the speech of the right honorable gentleman himself (Mr Pitt) who had said, at an early stage of the discussion of that subject, that he believed the public rather reproached government for supineness, than blamed it for its promptitude in going to war. This was a mode of bespeaking the opinion of the public ; and he could not help saying it appeared to him, from that and other things, that attempts were made, and some of them, he was sorry to say, successful ones, to inflame the public mind with regard to France. He was surprised to hear it said by one honorable gentlemen in that house, that the only consolation that could arise from the

death or murder of the late unfortunate Louis, was that it would rouse the indignation and animosity of mankind against France. This was a consolation arising from inhumanity, that he did not envy; he knew there were those who did not mourn that unhappy event. There were those who did not interest themselves to avert that misfortune. But those who loved freedom, or cherished liberty, must ever deplore the transaction, because by one act they had armed despotism, and given a fatal blow to the general interests of mankind. Such was his opinion now, and such it always had been upon that subject.

With regard to the other motive of ministers, namely, that of diverting the attention of the public from the question of parliamentary reform, he believed in his conscience that there was a design of that nature entertained by ministers in this country which had succeeded for a time; but all this was temporary, for the people were not to be deluded for ever. God forbid they should! God forbid that a brave nation should be blinded for a long time by a few individuals; and that a whole country should be false to itself, and destitute of honour, because an individual or two had betrayed their character, and because a few persons were interested in propagating false alarms. That was not to be expect-

ed; indeed the deception was too coarse in its nature to last for much length of time; and the reports were too ridiculous about plots, conspiracies, and treasons, to be long credited. How stood facts upon this occasion? — A noble Duke (Richmond) had formerly been of opinion, that there was nothing to be seen but danger for want of a parliamentary reform; but he had so elevated himself of late upon fortifications of his own creating, and availed himself of his great power of discernment, that he was now able to discover plots, conspiracies, and treasons, under the garb of a parliamentary reform, or under any reform. The alarm had been brought forward in great pomp and form on Saturday morning. At night all the mail coaches were stopped; the Duke of Richmond stationed himself, among other curiosities, at the Tower; a great municipal officer too had made a discovery exceedingly beneficial to the people of this country. He meant the Lord Mayor of London, who had found out that there was, at the King's Arms, in Cornhill, a debating society, where principles of the most dangerous tendency were propagated; where people went to buy treason at sixpence a head; and where it was retailed to them by the glimmering of an inch of candle, and five minutes, to be measured by the glass, were allowed to

each traitor to perform his part in overturning the state. And yet coarse and ridiculous as they were, these things had their effect with the public for a time, and they certainly did create a general impression of fear. — Here Mr Sheridan entered into a detail of many circumstances and stories, founded upon false alarms in several parts of the kingdom: first, when the alarm began, carts, waggons, and coaches, were said to arrive daily and hourly at the Tower, filled with traitors from different parts of the island, and ministers were applauded for their prudence and activity in the service of the state. Not one word of truth in the whole case! Not a being brought to the Tower — not a being charged with treason! The whole was a miserable fabrication to deceive the credulous. Suspicion, indeed, had been entertained; and he believed that many letters had been stopped at the post-office, and he had no doubt that many of his were among the number; he said he did not wish to talk of himself, but as so much had been said upon the subject of correspondence with foreign powers, and as hints were thrown out in various channels, under the direction and encouragement of ministers, that he and others, with whom he agreed on public subjects, held improper correspondence with other powers, he

trusted the house would excuse him for adverting to himself, and saying, that if government should think it worth their while, he should not, on his own part, have the smallest objection to publishing every word in every letter he ever wrote upon the subject of politics. This he did to refute at once all the calumny which had been spread upon that subject. He had not the least doubt but that he might safely say the same thing of others who had been slandered in the same way. There was a paper drawn up by him, which he had no difficulty in saying he should be glad to avow every where, and on any occasion; and this he said in order that it might be understood that no apprehension of misconstruction should deter him from saying he wished it to be published; he was confident it was not repugnant to the principles of justice and humanity. This related to the subject of the trial of the late King of France. He said this in hopes of defeating the purposes of those who were so malicious as to insinuate, from the most unworthy motives, that there existed a faction in this country connected with its enemies. He could have wished that there should not have been any necessity for his declaring, that he abhorred the principle of the decree of the National Convention of France of the 19th of November. Nothing should have deter-

red him from having written his sentiments upon such subjects. Nothing, he hoped, would deter ministers from publishing them at some future day, as there was no doubt but they had kept copies of them, and various other letters, at the post-office.

He then came to take notice of the manner in which government had proceeded to create the alarm to which he had alluded. They had advertised Mr John Frost and Captain Perry. The public were to look upon these two gentlemen as traitors. One hundred pounds each was to be given for apprehending them. One of them (Mr Frost) was at this hour in this country, under bail, and ready for his trial, if he is to be tried; and the other was charged only with having printed, in the *Argus*, what the Chancellor of the Exchequer had himself delivered in a speech upon the subject of parliamentary reform. He said, he should not have mentioned these things, but to prove that great pains had been taken to carry on a system of delusion. There was another fact, which was too extraordinary to be omitted. A story had been trumped up, that there was a plan for taking the Tower by the French; after which, the whole of our constitution was to be overturned, and the Royal Family were to be murdered. At the head

of this plot was to be placed that most execrable character, Marat, whom the French would have done well long ago to have removed, and which they would have been able to accomplish, had they not joined to him Robespierre, and others of a different character. This fiction was not enough; for we are told that there were certain people in pay by the French, for the purpose of destroying as many of the people of this country as they could, and that attempts had been made to poison the New River. There was no doubt but that these things appeared now to be too ridiculous to be believed; and yet many gave credit to them, insomuch that the proprietors of the New River were obliged to advertise in all the newspapers the falsehood of that report. Was this no hardship, or did it not shew a shameful disposition to impose upon the public, and to work up the people of this country into fury against the French? In farther confirmation of this, he referred the house to the gross clumsy calumny of the various newspapers which were published from day to day, under the authority of administration, where every thing that had any relation to the French was abused without mercy: by this the French were given to understand, for many months, that our court was at enmity with them. This walso as part of



the system of delusion which had been practised, in order to bring about a rupture between the two countries. There was one paper in particular, said to be the property of members of that house, and published and conducted under their immediate direction, which had for its motto a garbled part of a beautiful sentence, when it might, with much more propriety, have assumed the whole —

——— *Solem quis dicere falsum  
Audeat? Ille etiam cœcos instare tumultus  
Sæpe monet, fraudemque et operta tumescere bella.*

But it was on the authority of government alone that he rested upon, when he made these observations. An insurrection was said to be planned by corrupting the soldiers, and this turned out to be the sum of sixpence given for porter in Edinburgh: now what the scarcity of money might be in that country he could not tell; but this was very clear, that the system of corruption had not been carried to any very great extent. He then alluded to the burning of Mr Dundas in effigy by the people of Scotland, to which circumstance he imputed the soreness that the right honorable gentleman had displayed in the account he had given of the pretended insurrec-

tion in that country. It was said that Rotundo , a very notorious ruffian from France , had been in England , and no doubt for execrable purposes ; but he was not sent here on a sanguinary embassy ; but fled merely to elude the hand of justice. There were other stories afloat at the same period equally ridiculous , and ramified into various rumours. It was said that numbers were kept in pay ; that they were drilled and disciplined in dark rooms by a serjeant in a brown coat ; and that , on a certain signal being given , they would sally forth from porter-rooms and back-parlours , and finally subvert the constitution. Such were the idle stories with which for months the people have been amused. There was another circumstance which struck a panic into government , the planting the tree of liberty in Dundee. But this was like

« Birnam wood coming to Dunsinane. »

This insurrection , as it was called , originated with a few school - boys , the chastisement of whom , by their master , restored them to their loyalty , and prevented them from overturning the constitution. Some persons , through a motive of indefensible humour , had written a letter to Sir George Yonge , informing him of an insur-

rection at Salisbury, when no such insurrection really existed. It was likewise said that there was an insurrection at Shields. The military dispatched; but the insurrection had ceased, and the seditious insurgents were voluntarily assisting in getting off a King's ship that had run aground. He next instanced what had been deemed a seditious tumult at Yarmouth, which was equally well founded as what he had before noticed. If Mr Pitt was not so stiff-necked and lofty — if he condescended to mix in public meetings he would not be apt to be led into those errors which were practised, he must suppose with too much success, on his credulity. In all the various accounts of pretended insurrections, he maintained that there was not the least proof of discontent in the public mind, or disaffection to government in any one of these, but that the whole arose from other causes. These things entitled him to say, that there was ground for inquiry into the subject, and that an inquiry ought to take place to set the public mind at rest upon such topics. He then touched upon the addresses transmitted from patriots in pot-houses to the National Convention, a long list of which had been compiled under the auspices of the Treasury. One of them was signed by Mr Hardy, an honest shoemaker, who little

dreamt, God help him, how near he had been to overturning the constitution.

He next took notice of the effect of the system of delusion in the metropolis, and the hardships under which many individuals laboured in consequence of that system: where publicans had been told by different magistrates of the effect of their allowing any conversation upon politics in their houses; that if they conducted themselves in the least degree displeasing to the court, they should lose their licenses; and still farther, they were asked, what papers they took in. «Do you take in the Morning Chronicle, or Post?» — «Yes, Sir.» — «Take care there is no sedition in it; for if there is, you are liable to punishment for distributing it to your customers.» There was one very particular case in this respect; the Unicorn in Covent Garden, where a society had long met to discuss the propriety of a parliamentary reform. The landlord was sent for to Sir Sampson Wright; the man appeared, and explained the nature of the society. Sir Sampson Wright said, it was perfectly a harmless meeting in itself, but advised him not to suffer the society to meet again, because it might give offence to the higher powers. So that a man was not to have a newspaper which he liked, or which his customers might

be desirous of seeing; nor was a harmless society to be held, because it might be disagreeable to the higher powers. He was given to understand also, that every thing that had passed in his house for months was perfectly known to the magistrates, as well as that of every other public house, for they had agents employed for this purpose.

He then took notice of the expression of the Attorney-General at the opening of the session of parliament, of his having 200 cases to bring forward for prosecution only; a very few of whom had been at all brought forward, and many of those only booksellers for selling in the way of trade the Rights of Man, omitting all the parts objected to by the Attorney-General in the trial of Mr Paine, and for selling Mr Paine's Address to the Addressers, and the Jockey Club. Mr Sheridan said, he had 200 cases to submit to the Attorney-General, and to that house, of real hardship sustained by innocent individuals, and which he should have stated this night, but that the accidental and unexpected diligence of the Lords had called for so much of his time last week on the trial of Mr Hastings, as not to allow him to collect these cases, but which might be hereafter attended to and discussed in that house. Many of them arose out

of the spirit of the alien bill, in its nature oppressive — a bill, the exercise of which must soon incapacitate for ever any man from being a proper minister of a free country. It was impossible that ministers could know the proper objects in all cases to be sent away; and if they did not know of any such, they became constrained to send some away to save appearances, and to keep themselves in countenance. This reflection led him to take notice of the practice of erecting barracks all over this kingdom, also part of the same system, and tending, with all their other measures, uniformly to the point of despotism.

The next point which came to be noticed was, the mode adopted on the part of the Treasury, to discover persons who distribute seditious books. This was done by means of a circular letter all over the country, from Messrs. Chamberlaine and White, solicitors to the Treasury, to various attornies, employing them as agents in this business. This, Mr Sheridan observed, was to the last degree dangerous; because it went to the effect of placing in a situation to be tempted, a set of men not highly distinguished for superior morality, and of making them derive emolument from the litigation, which themselves, not their clients, were to create. Many attornies, he said, had, to their honour,

rejected the offer with scorn and indignation. The books chiefly to be noticed were, as he had said before, the works of Mr Paine and the Jockey Club; he had no occasion to say any thing of these books; but neither these, nor any other books, could launch out more freely on the necessity of a parliamentary reform, than the speeches of Mr Chancellor Pitt, and the Duke of Richmond; or more grossly against kings, than the right honorable gentleman (Mr Burke) upon former occasions. To prove this, he read passages from the noble Duke's address to the county of Sussex, and to Colonel Sharman and the volunteers of Ireland, in which he asserted, that it was in vain for the people to look to the house of commons for redress, that they could find it only in themselves; that they ought to assert their right, and not to desist till they should have established a house of commons truly representing every man in the kingdom. From Mr Burke's speech on his motion for leave to bring in his bill of reform, he read a passage calculated to represent the peers of the realm in the most abject, degraded state. He said, he was sorry that the report was not made to the king in council, of the conviction of persons charged with misdemeanors; if it were usual to make such a report, he should like very much

to hear the observations of His Majesty's ministers on the cases of some of the wretched bill-stickers, convicted of publishing seditious libels. When the seditious passages were read, the noble Duke might say, « he borrowed that from the preamble to my reform bill. » The right honorable gentleman might say, « that expression was stolen from the speech which I made, when I proposed to the house of commons my plan for a parliamentary reform. » Mr Sheridan said, he wondered how these personages could bear their own feelings, when they knew that some poor wretches were lying upon straw in the gloom of a prison, for having published sentiments which they had solemnly professed in and out of parliament. The offence was the same in all, but mark the difference of the treatment ; — punishment and a prison were the lot of the one set, whilst the others were honoured with places and emoluments, and seats in His Majesty's council.

He then took notice of the principles of the society, of which Mr Reeves was the leader, and of all others formed upon that plan. These societies were described by Mr Law, in the letter which he published on the 24th of January last, in the Morning Chronicle, stating his reasons for withdrawing from that society ; and stating,



amongst other things, that they proceeded against republicans and levellers upon private anonymous letters; nothing, he said, could be more infamous than such a principle.

He took notice of a sermon preached before the house of lords, by a learned prelate, in which his lordship complained of the folly with which people had of late suffered themselves to be carried away by a spirit of discussion about the origin of government. The slavishness of this high-church doctrine, which discountenanced enquiry, could, Mr Sheridan said, be equalled only by the want of charity, which appeared in another part of the sermon, in which the public indignation was directed against a particular description of men (Protestant dissenters) who were represented as unworthy of the name of fellow-christians: He touched upon a publication of Dr Tatham, in which he accuses Dr Priestley as an accomplice in the murder of the King of France. and told him, that whatever pretension he might have to reputation for abilities, he must give up his heart, which could in no light whatever be defended. — Here Mr Sheridan took notice of the disgraceful riots at Birmingham, and of the difficulties thrown in the way of payment of the money ordered by verdicts of juries upon trials for

the damages sustained by these riots. But even this was exceeded by what had taken place in Cambridge, for, to such a pitch of insolent injustice had the system of political oppression been carried against publicans, that they were compelled to take an oath, that they not only would not suffer political disputes in their houses, but that they would give an account of the behaviour and conversation of every republican they might happen to know or hear of. All this was infamous, but it was the effect of the panic he had so frequently alluded to; it was owing to that panic that the Chancellor of the Exchequer objected the other day to the bringing up, and receiving of the petition from the inhabitants of Nottingham, stating the necessity of a parliamentary reform, a petition not half so objectionable as the Chester petition, which had been received. It was owing to that panic, that a right honorable gentleman ( Mr Burke ) did not of late speak with the eloquence with which he used to command the admiration of his auditors. For now really the taste of his mind, and the character of his understanding was altered. It was owing to that panic, that another right honorable gentleman ( Mr Windham ) had brought his mind to approve what his heart had for years before abhorred; he meant the erection of bar-

racks. It was owing to that panic, that that right honorable gentleman had prevailed upon himself to support a minister, because he had a bad opinion of him. It was owing to that panic, that a noble and learned lord (Loughborough) in the other house, had given his disinterested support to government, and had actually accepted of the seals of an administration he had uniformly reprobated from its commencement. If that noble and learned lord acted from the same principle of the right honorable gentleman, that of supporting an administration because he thought it a bad one, he wished to know what his opinion must be of its profligacy, since he went so far as to accept an office under it. But above all, it was owing to that panic that the right honorable gentleman to whom he had alluded to before had lost his fine taste entirely, and had become the slave of the most ridiculous pantomimic trick and contemptible juggling; and carried about with him daggers and knives to assist him in efforts of description. It was to this panic also, that the milk of the Christian religion too had lost its mildness, and a spirit of intolerance had renewed its fierceness from the pulpit. He adverted to the letter signed by Mr Windham and others, and addressed to the Whig Club, in which they signified

their intention of withdrawing from the Club. Mr Sheridan represented this letter as an effect of nothing but panic; for otherwise a gentleman could never have thought of going such lengths in favor of Ministers whom he despised, and whom he could not trust, and against a man whom he affected to admire and respect. He never could have thought of withdrawing from a club, because it had nobly resolved to resist calumny, and called upon its members to rally round the champion of liberty against whom the shafts of calumny were directed; but who, the more he was calumniated, the dearer he must become to those generous friends, who were attached to him for his virtues and his talents. — When he found the right honorable gentleman ( Mr Windham ) leagued against such a man, he declared in a very impassioned tone, that though he was convinced the right honorable gentleman was by nature truly brave, he verily believed the panic which had seized him, had not only affected the clearness of his head, but also violated the integrity of his heart. He dwelt much upon the question of parliamentary reform, and shewed that he and his friends were blamed for having been true to those principles to which Mr Pitt and the Duke of Richmond had found it their interest to prove false.

He recommended it to his honorable friend (Mr Grey) to persevere in his intention of making a motion for a parliamentary reform ; but he advised him not to make any profession on the occasion ; not to promise that as a man and a minister he would support a reform ; nor to say that , unhackneyed in the ways of men , he would pursue only the paths of plain-dealing and honesty ; in a word , not to say that the times were not good enough for him , for all this had been said by a right honorable gentleman ( Mr Pitt ) who had shewn that he was a stranger to the performance of the most solemn engagement , and that if he could not accommodate himself to the times , he would make the times accommodate themselves to him . He was sure , he said , that his honorable friend would never be found to resemble such a character ; he had a lofty spirit , seated in a heart of honor ; and what he was convinced was right , that he was sure he would inflexibly pursue . He concluded by making the following motion , and said that if it was adopted , he meant to follow it up with a motion for an address to His Majesty , praying that he would lay before a secret committee of the house all discoveries made respecting seditious practices , together with all information and letters on the same subject received or intercepted .

• That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, praying that he would be pleased to order such communications as may have been received, as to the existence of seditious practices in this country, to be laid before a committee of the house. •

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## ON THE TRAITOROUS CORRESPONDENCE BILL.

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MARCH 22, 1793.

Mr Sheridan said, that the right honorable gentleman (Mr Burke) who had just sat down, had, as he usually did, made a very eloquent speech; and, as usual also, applied his wit, his mirth and humour, upon subjects which did not perhaps call for either. — wars, treasons, murders, and massacres. He should not follow the right honorable gentleman upon all he had said, because that would be entering into the discussion of points arising out of the clauses of the bill, which, in his opinion, ought to be reserved for discussion in the committee. The right honorable gentleman had begun with saying he was always desirous of appealing to the house, on the sense of what he called the good times of the constitution. Mr Sheridan

said, he should be glad to join in that appeal, if he saw it done with an honest intention, or if he did not see that this was done by gentlemen who only referred to those times, when they had to introduce any subject which had for its object the increase of their own power hereafter, and took references from times of danger, for the purpose of quoting the degree of confidence which was then thought to be necessarily reposed in the officers of government: and thus the better to prepare the people at this time for the same confidence, when the same danger did not exist, and consequently where there could not be the same reason for such confidence and power. Here the right honorable gentleman's deception began. He said, that immediately after the declaration of rights, and the bill of rights, came a power by which the King was enabled to order any person to be taken up, and that on suspicion only, of being an enemy to the state. Having advanced thus far, the right honorable gentleman then came to a conclusion directly, that what was done on that occasion should certainly, by the fairest reason, be done on this; for, said he, would you not do now what the wisdom and virtue of your ancestors prompted them to do under similar circumstances? The answer was plain and short.



The circumstances are not similar. We were , at the time that the right honorable gentleman alluded to , at the era of a revolution. Was that the case with this country at this moment ? Did the right honorable gentleman , or did they who pretended to agree with him , mean to say , and to persevere in it as an argument , that we are now in as equal a degree of danger , as we were at the time of the revolution ? If this was answered in the affirmative , then there might upon that answer be an end entirely to every barrier which the subject ever had against oppression ; for if we were now in a state as alarming as at that period , the argument would go to the suspension of the Habeas-Corpus act , and to place the whole kingdom under martial law. But it seemed that the present time was to be considered similar to that of the revolution to a degree only. — To what degree ? If two or three factious persons could be named in this country , was that to be considered as similar in such a degree to the time of the revolution , as to render it necessary to introduce the same measure of precaution as at that period ? But who were these very factious persons ? Upon this , however , the right honorable gentleman had come to something like a pledge that he would name certain persons of that description at some future day.

— “ I now challenge him to name those persons when he pleases, ” said Mr Sheridan, “ for painful as these observations are for me to make, I must repeat to that right honorable gentleman that I expect to hear his list of names and his proofs ; — but then let me tell him what sort of proof I shall require of him. ” He meant not to be satisfied with the right honorable gentleman’s reiterating his charges vaguely, or even of his naming any particular men, and calling them traitors ; because we all knew the facility with which that could be done. Nor did he mean to say he should be contented with hearing general assertions of our danger. He should expect to hear the right honorable gentleman mention the names of the conspirators, and what they were : and what measures they had taken to manifest their intentions, and consequently to justify the right honorable gentleman with loading them with the black appellation of traitors. He should expect also, of all the supporters of the bill in question as a matter of necessity, and as a measure justified by precedent, some proof of that necessity. If they failed in this, then he must declare them the calumniators of the people of this country. At the time which was now said to be similar to the present, he meant the revolution, something like evidence was given of

the necessity of the measures which parliament adopted. A plot had been formed against the King's life, and the King himself came to parliament and informed them of the discovery of the plot, in a speech which he delivered from the throne. (Here Mr Sheridan read the speech of King William to the parliament — the substance of which was, that there was a plot to assassinate His Majesty.) Would the right honorable gentleman assure us that his present Majesty had made such a declaration to him, even in private? — that there was a plan laid for the sudden invasion of the kingdom (of which there surely could be no danger, while we had so vigilant and active an administration); that some of the conspirators were already in custody, and that care had been taken to have the others discovered. Now, to be plain with gentlemen who said this bill was necessary, he must say that he wanted proof, something like this. And what was the case in the present moment, and how stood facts with respect to sedition in this country? Why, he believed there was one editor of a newspaper who had been frightened by ministers, and had run away; an attorney was under prosecution on a charge for which he had given bail, and a bill-sticker was in jail? These were the mighty proofs of the whole country

being in a state of insurrection! But to come nearer to the right honorable gentleman's doctrine, and the consistency of his conduct — he had, in the course of the discussion of this subject, maintained the right of the legislature to alter the succession, and to support the principle of punishing those who asserted a contrary doctrine; and yet, if the right honorable gentleman was to be judged by his first pamphlet on the French revolution, he would be the first to incur that penalty. Having said this, he returned to what appeared to him to be the real spirit of treason; and he desired the learned gentlemen on the other side to refute him, if they could. The true way of defining treason, was by the intention of the party; and the overt-act was only to be regarded as evidence of the intention. As to the observations of the right honorable gentleman on the necessity of rights remaining in a state of inaction for a long time, that they might acquire new vigor; and his simile of sleep to the body natural being the same as inactivity for a time to the body politic, there was no doubt of its being beautiful enough, and applicable too; for the Minister had often sung a sort of lullaby to the constitution. But as sleep was the sister of death, and yet relieved the human body from the weariness of labour; surely there was

no propriety in comparing it to the affairs of human life, and the benefit of civil rights; for although a human being might sleep to recover his health, there was no necessity for rights in society to be suspended in order to be preserved. The only objection he had to the figure was, that it had no truth for its foundation, for there was none of the weariness which required rest to any of the rights of the people of this country. The right honorable gentleman had made some allusions to a fortress, and said, that it was in some degree like a prison; but it became so only in consequence of a siege. Here again truth was not attended to in the figure, and upon this occasion he could not help coming to some facts well known to the public. This he did to shew, that there was not any ground for alarm in this country; and when he had done so, he trusted he should have answered the right honorable gentleman upon his observation of a fortress, evidently designed to prepare the people of this country for slavery, by comparing the island to a besieged fortress. Then he must ask whether there was any real cause of alarm when the Duke of Richmond converted the Tower into a fortress, and gave it all the appearance of a place preparing to hold out against an attack? Was there any information of designs being

formed for the taking it? Were there any well-grounded apprehensions of danger? If there were, then the precaution of the noble Duke was right — If not, he must say, that this was part of the system adopted by ministers for a well understood purpose; they raised an alarm which themselves did not believe. The right honorable gentleman said, it was not necessary, in all cases, to prove the existence of the crime, before he produced the remedy. Here again, Mr Sheridan said, he must observe, the right honorable gentleman was wrong in principle; it was the essence of justice never to enforce a hardship without a proof of its necessity. As to the right honorable gentleman's observation upon a law, which prohibits a certain number of people going together with blackened faces, which he instanced as a proof that the law prohibits a thing innocent in itself, for the sake of preventing an evil that might possibly attend it, he must say, that here again the right honorable gentleman was wrong; for this very act was not passed without proof of there being a number of persons who frequently had disguised themselves in that manner for mischievous purposes. However, he was far from saying that a man should never make use of any art in support of his virtuous intentions. If any person carried a

concealed dagger for the purpose of assassination, he was amenable to the law; but if he only brought it with him concealed, and made use of it for the purpose of heightening the effect of an oratorical attitude in the delivery of a sublime speech, he certainly was not. Again, the right honorable gentleman had alluded to the act of parliament which prohibited ships of a certain size and form from being employed in certain parts of commerce, in which the revenue was interested; — an act, Mr Sheridan said, which was harsh enough, and such as he did not approve of, but yet it was not passed before there had been proof laid before parliament of the evils existing which this act was proposed to remedy.

Thus far he had chosen to follow the right honorable gentleman on his own ground, that laws were made against things in themselves entirely innocent, for the purpose of preventing mischief. The truth, Mr Sheridan said, was certainly so; but then the right honorable gentleman forgot to add a few words, a little essential to the sense of the maxim — “after some proof was given of the necessity of such a law.” the whole of his had been totally neglected by the right honorable gentleman, and all the advocates for the present bill. The right honorable

gentleman said, that, as to the destruction of the constitution, he had no apprehension of it, and that he had no thought of giving it up; and then he launched out, as usual, into bitter invectives against the new affairs of France.

Mr Sheridan said, he had no objection to our avoiding to imitate the French, and to act for ourselves in every thing. — He wished that French principle, old as well as new, should be resisted; but if, in resisting the new, we inclined to imitate the old system of government in France, we should have no reason to congratulate each other upon our prudence. The old system of that country united all things that were hateful to a lover of liberty. It was kept up by the most abominable mode that was ever known in any part of Europe — by military insolence, instead of civil law — by extraordinary trust and confidence in the King's ministers, instead of watchfulness and jealousy — by tame acquiescence in all his measures, instead of resisting or examining any part of them; he wished, therefore, that as we rejected the new system of politics in France, we should take care not to fall into any imitation of the old. As to what the right honorable gentleman had said about giving up, if that became inevitable, the liberty of his country; and his remark, that were he



Cæsar, he should rather yield to Brutus, than to the great monarch of Persia; the situation of this country was not so bad as to make it necessary to enter into the imagination of any man that there was any danger to be apprehended to us from any disputes between individuals to any number, much less between any two individuals. But there might be danger in placing such confidence in any one, as to be blind to the tendency of his measures, and suffering him to proceed without opposing them; for when Hannibal penetrated Italy, and arrived at the gates of Rome itself, notwithstanding all the devastation he made, Rome recovered. After the Romans were attacked, and the city sacked by the Gauls, Rome recovered; but after Cæsar had usurped the dominion, it never recovered; nor should he think this country safe, if any man in it, whatever his station might be, should be suffered to proceed proudly, haughtily, and arrogantly, as if he were above the law; and should afterwards, by raising a false alarm among the people, by saying that the constitution was in danger, that there were traitors in the country, ultimately obtain his object — the placing himself in his situation with an establishment of despotic power. The next point to be considered was that of the charges against the

right honorable gentleman ( Mr Burke ) in the national convention. That right honorable gentleman had taken upon himself , on that occasion, to make use of the *visites domiciliaires* as practised in France, as a proof of their violation of the principles of justice. It was certainly harsh enough; but upon this point the right honorable gentleman might find some topics at home that would very worthily employ his wit , if he pleased; for to him the grievances and distresses of mankind were subjects of mirth. He might see in this metropolis the *visites domiciliaires* thriving wonderfully under the auspices of Mr Reeves, and the society of which he was so worthy a president; as also under Mr Luke Ideson , and Sir Joseph Banks ; these gentlemen , by themselves and agents , particularly the latter , had entered into a great number of houses, and had called upon the occupiers of them to give in a particular description of their inmates, the sex, the age, the stature, the colour, the complexion ; in short, Sir Joseph particularly had examined , into these circumstances with all the curiosity of a naturalist; and he must say , that unless we abandoned this practice, we should complain with an ill grace of the *visites domiciliaires*. As to the danger to which the right honorable gentleman alluded , and to which he said he was ex-

posed, unless he has more apprehension of it than I have for him, said Mr Sheridan, he will be pretty easy under that consideration. But, indeed, if he had not said he quoted from the *Moniteur*, I should have thought that he was speaking from his own mind, and for himself, as the whole of the matter is perfectly like the substance of his own speeches upon the affairs of France. — As to the gold to which the right honorable gentleman had alluded, certainly he had been a little public in the declaration, as well as the circumstances with which he had accompanied it; he had, indeed, in the hints he had thrown out upon that subject, and the possible effect of it, reminded Mr Sheridan of the practice in the trial of Sir Robert Walpole, when gentlemen in that house used to cry out, ‘Places! places! places!’ But as to places, whether it was that gentlemen had lately gone over to the Minister in such numbers, that there was not room for them all, or that, in the language of John Bull, they had eaten up all the corn already, he knew not; but he believed that, all circumstances considered, there was a tolerable security, at least for a time, for the independence of the right honorable gentleman. As to the observation of the noble lord, that in all other wars between this country and France, the

two countries had respectively paid attention to the constitution of each other; he wished to know whether the noble lord thought the fact so, when that power wanted to force us to accept a pretender to the throne? and whether, if the French do not again receive Mr Frost with an address, and think proper to have another king, that we shall then be in a state wherein we shall have nothing to fear?

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ON

LORD AUCKLAND'S MEMORIAL

TO THE STATES GENERAL.

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APRIL 25, 1793.

MR SHERIDAN rose, and said, that the motion which he should have the honor of submitting to the house, was one that not only involved the character of the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) and the whole of His Majesty's ministers, but also the character of the British nation, and therefore was of the highest importance. It had in view that of calling for an explanation of the real intent, nature, purpose, and object of the war in which we were now engaged. Such was the description of the motion with which he should preface his address to the house. In the course of the discussions which had taken place on the present war, on one subject there had been a concurrence of opinion, whatever difference

of opinion, whatever difference subsisted on others; — that the increasing power and ambitious views of France should be resisted, and our allies protected, was unanimously agreed to. On the subject of the war, three different opinions had occurred; the first thought it a war of necessity, but limited as to its object; the second, in which he classed, thought that no administration should permit the independence of this country to be in danger from the exorbitant power of France, or the rights of our allies to be invaded; yet, thinking the security of this country, and indemnification to Holland might have been obtained by negociation, they thought the war, at the period it occurred, not necessary. A third class viewed the power of France as much less pernicious than the principles she had adopted; and abhorring the conduct of those in authority there, thought vengeance and extermination to those men and those principles, were objects which this country was bound in interest and duty to pursue. He, and others with whom he had the honor and pleasure to agree, had endeavoured to draw from those gentlemen something like a definition of the extent to which their principles might or would lead them; but from all the discussion which took place upon that subject, nothing like an expla-

nation was given upon that point. This day, however, he was determined to put the subject to the test, and he should maintain that ministers had abandoned the principles of the war, upon which alone they had the assistance of the moderate, and the general concurrence of the country, and the only principle they themselves were fond of professing, namely, to keep faith with our allies, to check the aggrandizement of France, and to preserve the safety of this country. If, in entering upon this subject, any gentleman expected that he should be brought to pledge himself in the least degree with respect to the principles or the politics of the noble Lord (Auckland), or that he should be influenced by any considerations with regard to that nobleman, such a gentleman would certainly be disappointed; for he must frankly declare, that personally against him, or any other person in administration, he had no ill will; but at the same time he had no hesitation in saying, that he did not respect or esteem him. He would say no more upon that subject, for a reason always conclusive with him, because he was not present; all, therefore, he should say of him, he begged to be understood as speaking of His Majesty's minister at the Hague. In this view, he must say, that he disapproved of every memorial that

noble lord had set his name to, from the disturbances in France, down to the signing that of the 5th of the present month, upon which the motion he should conclude with would be founded. All he was concerned in was marked by a sort of officious ostentation, which ill became the character he ought to represent. Instead of the moderate language of a minister, desirous to shew that he was only an ambassador, he appeared always in the style of a viceroy, whose business it was to dictate and command. The paper with which he announced the war with France, was of this haughty, arrogant style, in which he called the National Assembly of France miscreants. Such language, Mr Sheridan said, was not only improper, but, under the circumstances of the case, inexcusable; it was not the effect of an overpowering warmth, which frequently accompanied the animation of debate; they were the cool collected words of an ambassador, who ought to have reflected that he represented His Majesty of Great Britain, and the people of England; both of whom, he was sure, would be ashamed of such expressions; — expressions which could answer no good purpose; neither our soldiers nor our sailors would enlist the sooner, nor fight the better for it; and the people of this country ought not to be sup-



posed to use harsh expressions against any others who had the direction of the public force of a nation, still less that they could instruct their own ambassador to be intolerant : such conduct would be disgraceful and ignominious. Here, to illustrate this point, Mr Sheridan made a quotation from Vattel, on the law of nations, who says, that for nations at war it is necessary to observe, that they ought to abstain from all harsh expressions of hatred, animosity, or contempt of each other, etc. This, he said, appeared to him to contain so good and necessary a lesson to Lord Auckland, that in the next dispatches, a copy of it ought to be sent to him. With regard to the specific paper of the 5th of April, he objected to it, not only on account of its particular indecency, but also on account of its opening and disclosing a new principle for carrying on the war — a principle hitherto in this country entirely without foundation. The first translation from the French stated, « That some of these detestable regicides are now in such a situation, that they can be subjected to the sword of the law. » But from that which was now upon the table, a new colour was attempted to be given to the sentence, by saying, « liable to be subjected to the sword of the law ; » this, he said, was not warranted by the original ; for the plain

sense of the sentence was, that these persons might be sacrificed, because they were in the hands of the Dutch. Again, the paper stated a recital of a former declaration, that his Britannic Majesty and their High Mightinesses would not fail to pursue the most efficacious measures to prevent the persons, who might themselves be guilty of so atrocious a crime, from finding any asylum in their respective states. To which the Dutch gave answer, that they would refuse any asylum to such persons; that they would drive them away; but not one word about putting them to death. The war was declared on the 21st of January, and there the matter rested till the 5th of April, and for what reason? Because it was not until this time the commissioners of the Convention got into custody. It was only then necessary to say, that these regicides should be subjected to the sword of the law, which was, in other words, that they should be put to death. If ministers said they gave no instructions for this, he said he should be perfectly satisfied, and the infamy would only fall upon the individual. — The noble lord proceeded to state in his memorial, that the divine vengeance seemed not to be tardy; upon this he had only to observe, that we were engaged in a war, which for our safety we had pursued, to the accomplish-

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ment of its originally avowed object ; and with respect to the divine vengeance, from motives of respect, decorum, and piety, we ought to be silent. The memorial was as follows : —

### TRANSLATION.

High and mighty Lords,

It is known that towards the end of the month of September, last year, his Britannic Majesty and your High Mightinesses gave, in concert, a solemn assurance, that in case the imminent danger which then threatened the lives of their most Christian Majesties, and their family should be realized, His Majesty and your High Mightinesses would not fail to take the most efficacious measures to prevent the persons who might render themselves guilty of so atrocious a crime, from finding any asylum in your respective dominions. This event, which was foreseen with horror, has taken place; and the Divine vengeance seems not to have been tardy *Some of these detestable regicides are already in such a situation, that they may be subjected to the sword of the law.* The rest are still in the midst of a people whom they have plunged into an abyss of evils, and for whom famine, anarchy, and civil war, are preparing new calamities. In short, every thing that we see happen, induces us to consider as at hand the end of these wretches, whose madness and atrocities have filled with terror and indignation all those who respect the principles of religion, morality, and humanity.

The undersigned, therefore, submit to the enlightened judgment and wisdom of your High Mightinesses, whether it would not be proper to employ all the means in your power to prohibit from entering your states in Europe, or your colonies, all those members of the self-titled National Convention, or of the pretended Executive Council, who have, directly or indirectly, participated in the said crime; and if they should be discovered and arrested, to deliver them up to justice, that they may serve as a lesson and example to mankind.

Done at the Hague, this 5th day of April, 1795.

(Signed)

AUCKLAND.

LOUIS C. DE STAHEMBERG.

[The translation above given is the same with that originally inserted in most of the newspapers; from which the translation presented to the house of commons differs, by substituting for the sentence printed in roman—*Some of these detestable regicides are already liable to be subjected to the sword of the law*—and for wretches, *Malheureux*, unhappy persons.

These men were delivered up by the treachery of Dumourier; and Lord Auckland recommended to the Dutch, that they might be murdered and assassinated. He wished to know if it was possible for a more horrid principle to be entertained, or one, if followed up, more likely to be attended with more horrid consequences.

Could we suppose that the French would not retaliate? What then would result? a general massacre of all prisoners of war. Such sentiments were odious to any man possessing the least feeling of humanity. The fate of those people, it seemed, was to be a lesson and example to mankind. He was sure the people of this country detested such lessons and examples. It reminded him of a proclamation recommending the extermination of America, during the war, and whilst the noble Lord (Auckland) was commissioner there; and to which there was a very sensible protest, which was supposed to be the production of a right honorable gentleman (Mr Burke) now in the house. This was drawn after the able speeches of Mr Fox, Mr Powys, and others in that house; and the Duke of Grafton and Duke of Richmond in the other; and was signed by a great number of the first persons in this country. This protest admirably explained the fatal effects of attempting the destruction or dismemberment of an empire. Here Mr Sheridan read the protest, and observed, that he wished this also to be sent in the next dispatches to Lord Auckland. But again, to return to the paper of the 5th of April, Mr Sheridan said, he objected to it for a reason which was independent of the general ground he had already stated; it was that of de-

claring any peace with the people of France utterly unattainable, until there should be dictated, according to the desire of the combined powers, a certain form of government to France. Were we, he asked, at war with the nation of France at this moment? If the principle on which we proceeded to the war was followed, he would say that we were not at war with the nation of France. The object we professed to have in view was accomplished; and we should negotiate with those who had the direction of the public force. Of what use was it to us to call their armies a banditti of robbers, and their mariners pirates? At last we must negotiate with them, or go the length of endeavouring to destroy them altogether — a fruitless and a vain attempt. Was it the object, or was it not, of this war, on our part, to assist the conspiracy to dictate a form of government to France, or totally to destroy the whole nation? He wanted a plain explicit answer. Let the minister speak fairly out. The people of England ought to know what were the views of the minister upon this war, and to what extent it was to be carried, that they might not be proceeding under a delusion. Supposing we had gained our original purpose, he wanted to know how peace was to be obtained, without negotiation with those who have the

exercise of government. If we countenanced the memorial of Lord Auckland, we should say, that the whole National Convention — all the members of the districts — in short, about eight or nine millions of people, must be put to death, before we can negotiate for peace. Supposing that we were to join the conspiracy to dictate a form of government to France, he then should wish to know what sort of government it was that we were to insist on. Were we to take the form of it from that exercised by the Emperor — or that of the King of Prussia? or was it to be formed by the lady who so mildly conducted the affairs of Russia? or were they all to lay their heads together, and, by the assistance of the Pope, dictate a form of government to France? Were the French to have a constitution, such as the right honorable gentleman (Mr Burke) was likely to applaud? Indeed he feared, that this was not yet settled; and there were various specimens of what had been already thought of by different powers. There were two manifestoes of the Prince of Cobourg; the one promised the form of government chosen by themselves, in which they agreed to have a monarchy; and afterwards, in the course of four days, this promise was retracted in consequence of the accession of Dumourier to the confede-

racy — What would the right hon. gentleman (Mr Burke) say if they should not give the French the form of the constitution of Poland ; — or would he content himself with saying, they ought not to have such a constitution? He believed that neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer, nor any of his supporters, would say any thing at present upon that subject. It appeared however somewhat mysterious, perhaps, that after the congress at Antwerp, in which Great Britain was not unrepresented, that the intention of the combined powers had altered ; and that a much more sanguinary mode was to be pursued against France than had been before intended ; and perhaps the time might come when the parties might follow the example set by the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick , and affirm that these were threats which were not intended to be carried into execution. But this was not the way to amuse us. The people of England would not long be content to remain in the dark as to the object of the war. Again he must ask , what was the object of the war ? Again he must ask , what was the object of our pursuit in conjunction with the other powers against France? Was it to restore the ancient tyranny and despotism of that nation? This would please some people, he knew ; — parti-



cularly emigrants; but nothing would be so hateful to the people of this country, or any other where there existed the least love of freedom; nor could any thing be more destructive to the tranquillity and happiness of Europe. Were we to join Dumourier in a declaration not to rest until we had put to death those detestable regicides, calling themselves philosophers, and all the miscreants who had destroyed all lawful authority in France? If we were, he would venture to say, this would be a war for a purpose entirely new in the history of mankind; and as it was called a war of vengeance, he must say, that we arrogated to ourselves a right which belonged to the divinity, to whom alone vengeance ought to be left. If the minister said, that on our part there was no intention to interfere in the internal government of France, he must then ask what were the views of the other powers, with whom we now acted in concert against France. Was it to make a partition of France, as they did of Poland? Or should he be told, that as far as regarded the affairs of France under the present power, he was talking of none who ought to be mentioned as a people; that the *sans culottes* were too contemptible a race to be mentioned; he would say, he meant to ask what was to become of the whole nation of France? If he was

told that it was impossible for the crowned heads, acting in concert upon this great occasion, to have any but just and honorable views, he would answer that the subject was of too much magnitude to be allowed to pass in such a manner; and in his suspicions he was justified by the example, and fortified by the observation of an honorable gentleman ( Mr Jenkinson ) with respect to the father of the present Emperor, that no man ought to take his word for one hour. No material alteration, he believed, had taken place in the views of that court since the death of that prince, nor of others in the present confederacy. Were we to forget that the King of Prussia encouraged the Brabanters to revolt, and then left them to their fate? Were we to forget the recent conduct with respect to Poland? Were we to forget the taking of Dantzic and Thorn? Indeed he thought, that those who every day told us, in pompous language, of the necessity there was for kings, and of the service they did to the cause of humanity, they should at least have spared the public the pain of thinking of these subjects, by not entering into the views of that unnatural confederacy. Indeed it was impossible for him to dismiss the consideration of Poland, without adverting to an eloquent passage in the work of a right honorable gentle-

man, who was an enthusiastic admirer of the late revolution there. Here Mr Sheridan quoted the following passage of Mr Burke's Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs : —

« The state of Poland was such, that there could scarcely exist two opinions, but that a reformation of its constitution, even at some expense of blood, might be seen without much disapprobation. No confusion could be feared in such an enterprise; because the establishment to be reformed was itself a state of confusion. A king without authority; nobles without union or subordination; a people without arts, industry, commerce, or liberty: no order within; no defence without; no effective public force, but a foreign force, which entered a naked country at will, and disposed of every thing at pleasure. Here was a state of things which seemed to invite, and might, perhaps, justify bold enterprise and desperate experiment. But in what manner was this chaos brought into order? The means were as striking to the imagination, as satisfactory to the reason, and soothing to the moral sentiments. In contemplating that change, humanity has every thing to rejoice and to glory in; nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to suffer. So far as it has gone, it probably is the most pure and defecated public good which ever has been conferred on mankind. We have seen anarchy and servitude at once removed; a throne strengthened for the protection of the people, without trenching on their liberties; all foreign cabal banished, by changing the crown from elective to hereditary; and what was a matter of pleasing wonder, we have seen a reigning king, from an heroic love to his country, exerting himself with all

the toil, the dexterity, the management, the intrigue, in favor of a family of strangers, with which ambitious men labor for the aggrandisement of their own. Ten millions of men in a way of being freed gradually, and therefore safely to themselves and the state; not from civil or political chains, which, bad as they are, only fetter the mind, but from substantial personal bondage. Inhabitants of cities, before without privileges, placed in the consideration which belongs to that improved and connecting situation of social life. One of the most proud, numerous, and fierce bodies of nobility and gentry ever known in the world, arranged only in the foremost rank of free and generous citizens. Not one man incurred loss, or suffered degradation. All, from the king to the day-labourer, were improved in their condition. Every thing was kept in its place and order; but in that place and order, every thing was bettered. To add to this happy wonder (this unheard-of conjunction of wisdom and fortune) not one drop of blood was spilled; no treachery; no outrage, no system of slander, more cruel than the sword; no studied insults on religion, morals, or manners; no spoil; no confiscation; no citizen beggared; none imprisoned; none exiled; the whole was effected with a policy, a discretion, an unanimity and secrecy, such as have never been before known on any occasion; but such wonderful conduct was reserved for this glorious conspiracy in favor of the true and genuine rights and interests of men. Happy people, if they know how to proceed as they have begun! Happy prince, worthy to begin with splendor, or to close with glory, a race of patriots and of kings: and to leave —

## PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES. 197

A name, which every wind to heav'n would bear,  
Which men to speak, and angels joy to hear.

To finish all — this great good, as in the instant it is, contains in it the seeds of all farther improvement; and may be considered as in a regular progress, because founded on similar principles, towards the stable excellence of a British constitution.

Here was a matter for congratulation and for festive remembrance through ages. Here moralists and divines might indeed relax in their temperance to exhilarate their humanity. »

Such, Mr Sheridan, said, was the description which the right honorable gentleman gave to that revolution; was it to be supposed, that he would afterwards say, that this ought to have been trampled upon and destroyed, or should suffer such an event to happen, and never utter a word upon the subject. He did not think that monarchs of the present day had fulfilled the promises that some persons had made, and which had been expected from them, so that their names might be handed down to posterity as a glorious example of integrity and justice! With respect to the future views of the different powers, they might best be conjectured by what had already happened. The Empress of Russia, upon the sincerity of whose motives, and integrity of whose actions, there could be no doubt,

previous to the attack on Poland, among other things in her manifesto, said by her minister —

« From these considerations, Her Imperial Majesty, my most gracious mistress, as well to indemnify herself for her many losses, as for the future safety of her Empire and the Polish dominions, and for the cutting off at once, for ever, all future disturbances and frequent changes of government, has been pleased now to take under her sway, and to unite for ever to her Empire, the following tracts of land, with all their inhabitants. »

This was the language for which the confederates were to justify perhaps the future taking under their sway, and uniting for ever to their empire, part of the dominions of France. — We had heard much of the abominable system of affiliation adopted by the French; but this was a Russian impartial affiliation, and no doubt the confederate powers approved of it. — In like manner will they affiliate all France, if they can. So will they England, when they have it in their power; and he was sorry to say, that if we joined in that infamous confederacy, and the people agreed to it, England would deserve to be so treated. The empress then proceeded to state what she expected for the favor she had conferred —

## PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES. 199

« Her imperial Majesty expects from the gratitude of her new subjects , that they , being placed by her bounty on an equality with Russians , shall , in return , transfer their love of their former country to the new one , and live in future attached to so great and generous an Empress. »

On an equality with Russia! This was a glorious equality , liable to be sent to Siberia with other Russian slaves. For this mighty favor they were to transfer , as naturally might be expected , the whole love they had for their native country , to Russia their new and happy land — for the same minister of this equitable and generous Empress proceeded to say —

« I , therefore , inform every person , from the highest to the lowest , that within one month , they must take the oath of allegiance before the witnesses whom I shall appoint ; and if any gentlemen , or other ranks possessing real or immoveable property , regardless of their own interest , should refuse to take the oath prescribed , three months are allowed for the sale of their immoveables , and their free departure over the borders ; after the expiration of which term , all their remaining property shall be confiscated to the crown. »

Really after such specimens , one would have supposed , but for the well-known character of the council of these confederate powers , they

were acting under the influence of madness , or they would not thus think of consulting the feelings of human nature. — But this was not enough — an oath , it seemed , must be taken , for —

« The clergy , both high and low , as pastors of their flocks , are expected to set the example in taking the oath ; and in the daily service in their churches , they must pray for her Imperial Majesty , for her successor , the Great Duke Paul Petrowitz , and for all the imperial family , according to the formula which shall be given them »

Here again there was evidence of a great and good mind , for this pious Empress was determined , that perjury should be very general in her dominions , and that the example should be set by the clergy ! — Mr Sheridan then proceeded to take notice of the great and good King of Prussia with respect to Dantzic , as specified in what he called his reason for taking possession of part of Poland with his military forces.

« It would certainly militate against the first rules of a sound policy , as well as the duties incumbent on us for the preservation of tranquillity in our state , if in such a state of things in a neighbouring great kingdom , we remained inactive spectators , and should wait for the period when the faction feel themselves strong enough to appear in public ; by which our own neighbouring provinces would be



exposed to several dangers , by the consequences of the anarchy on our frontiers.

We have therefore , in conjunction with Her Majesty the Empress of Russia , and with the assent of His Majesty the Roman Emperor , acknowledged , that the safety of our states did require , to set to the Republic of Poland such boundaries which are more compatible with her interior strength and situation ; and to facilitate her the means of procuring without prejudice to her liberty , a well ordained , and active form of government , of maintaining herself in the undisturbed enjoyment of the same , and preventing , by these means , the disturbances which have so often shaken her own tranquillity , and endangered the safety of her neighbours.

« In order to attain this end , and to preserve the Republic of Poland from the dreadful consequences which must be the result of her internal division , and to rescue her from her utter ruin , but chiefly to withdraw her inhabitants from the horrors of the destructive doctrine which they are but too prone to follow ; there is , according to our thorough persuasion , to which also Her Majesty the Empress of all the Russias accedes in the most perfect congruity with our intentions and principles , no other means , except to incorporate her frontier provinces into our states , and for this purpose immediately to take possession of the same , and to prevent , in time , all misfortunes which might arise from the continuance of the reciprocal disturbances.

« Wherefore we have resolved , with the assent of Her Russian Majesty , to take possession of the above-mentioned districts of Poland , and also of the

cities of Dantzic and Thorn , to the end of incorporating them to our states.

« We herewith publicly announce our firm and unshaken resolution , and expect that the Polish nation will very soon assemble in the diet , and adopt the necessary measures , to the end of settling things in an amicable manner , and of obtaining the salutary result of securing to the republic of Poland an undisturbed peace and preserving her inhabitants from the terrible consequences of anarchy. At same the time we exhort the states and inhabitants of the districts and towns which we have taken possession of as already mentioned, both in a gracious and serious manner , not to oppose our commanders and troops , ordered for that purpose; but rather tractably to submit to our government, and acknowledge us, from this day forward , as their lawful king and sovereign, to behave like loyal and obedient subjects , and to renounce all connection with the crown of Poland. »

Now , after this , Mr Sheridan said , he wished to know whether any robbery that had been committed by the most desperate of the French , or whether any of their acts were more infamous than this ? Of what consequence was it to any man ; whether he was plundered by a man with a white feather in his hat , or by one with a night-cap on his head ? He said , that if there could be any difference , the solemnity with which the thing was done was an aggravation of the insult. The poorer sort of the French

could plead distress, and could also say that they had endured the hardships, the toils, and the perils of a winter campaign. But here was nothing but a naked robbery, without any part taken in the calamity which gave birth to it. He had alluded to these things merely for the purpose of giving the minister an opportunity of disapproving of them : he hoped he should not hear the principle avowed. Crowned heads, he thought, were at present led by some fatal infatuation to degrade themselves and injure mankind. But some, it seems, regard any atrocity in monarchs, as if it had lost its nature by not being committed by low and vulgar agents. A head with a crown, and a head with a night-cap, totally altered the moral quality of actions — robbery was no longer robbery — and death, inflicted by a hand wielding a pike, or swaying a sceptre, was branded as murder, or regarded as innocent. This was a fatal principle to mankind, and monstrous in the extreme. He had lamented early the change of political sentiments in this country which indisposed Englishmen to the cause of liberty. The worst part of the revolution in France is, that they have disgraced the cause they pretended to support ; however, none, he was persuaded, would deny that it was highly expedient to know the extent of our alliance

with powers who had acted so recently in the manner he had represented, and to have the object of our pursuit in this war distinctly known. The minister may perhaps in future come down to the house, and say he is sorry ; but it has become highly necessary to interfere with the power of Britain farther, as the crowned ladies and gentlemen of Europe cannot agree about the partition of France, or that such a disposition is about to take place, that we shall be worse off than if we had let France remain as it was. Those who feared the attachment of men to French principles, argued wrong ; from the effect of the experiment they would never be popular : nothing but crimes and misery swelled all the accounts from that country. If the peasant had been represented happy and contented, dancing in his vineyard, surrounded with a prosperous and innocent family — if such accounts had come, the tidings would have been gladly received ; at present we hear of nothing but want and carnage — very unattracting indeed. More danger, he thought, arose from a blind attachment to power, which gains security from the many evils abounding in France. On the same principle that Prussia divided Poland, he contended, they might act here. They declared a prevalence of French principles existed in Po-

land : His Majesty's proclamation asserts the same here, and is therefore, in this sense, an invitation to come and take care of us. Could such despots love the free constitution of this country ? On the contrary, he was persuaded that, upon the very same principle that Poland was divided, and Dantzic and Thorn subjugated, England itself might be made an object for the same fate, as soon as it became convenient to the confederates to make the experiment : he would defy any man to shew the principle upon which a difference could exist with regard to us and the other sacrificed countries. in the wishes and desires of the combined powers. But supposing this to be out of all question, and that this country had nothing to dread in that respect, and that all Europe had nothing to look to but the extermination of French principles ; how would the present prospect of our success then appear ? Could we entertain so vain a hope, (indeed he was astonished to hear it even hinted) that the French, who had all the winter been lying in the snow at some periods, and wading up to their necks in water at others, in an enemy's country, fighting for their rights, will, in their own, submit to give them up in a mild season ? The thought was too absurd, and the expectation too extravagant, to be harboured

by a man possessed of a spark of rationality. It was upon these grounds he asked what were the lengths to which ministers intended we should go with the present war. From all the circumstances of the memorial presented by Lord Auckland to the States-General, and the dispositions of our allies, as indicated by their late conduct, it behoved this country to come to a distinct understanding on the subject of the nature of our alliances, and the objects of the war. This, he thought, would best be obtained by proposing a solemn disavowal and reprobation of the views and dispositions indicated in the memorial of Lord Auckland; and a condemnation of that paper. Our situation required him to be explicit on every thing that excited caution; the state of commercial credit was as alarming as unexpected; the list of bankrupts was unprecedented — as many as five hundred commissions had issued in the very short time the present Chancellor had held the seals. After ten years peace, we had not reached our peace establishment, and our revenue had never exceeded seventeen millions. A deficiency in our revenue must now be expected, and he had heard that it was already perceptible to a prodigious extent. He hoped he should not be represented as depressing our spirits, and raising those of our

enemies. In making these observations it was necessary to be explicit, and not to under-rate the difficulties we must of necessity encounter. Ministers, therefore, should not be too much elated at the great and unexpected success of our allies, and enter too easily into their views; on the contrary, he wished them to avail themselves of fortunate occurrences as soon as possible, to extricate this country from the evils of war. He concluded with moving, « That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, to express to His Majesty the displeasure of this house at a certain memorial, dated the 5th of April, 1793, presented to the States-General of the United Provinces, signed by the right honorable Lord Auckland, His Majesty's minister at the Hague, the said memorial containing a declaration to the following, effect : — ‘ Some of these detestable regicides’, (meaning by this expression the commissioners of the National Convention of France, delivered to Prince Cobourg by General Dumourier) are now in such a situation that they can be subjected to the sword of the law; the rest are still in the midst of a people whom they have plunged into an abyss of evils, and for whom famine, anarchy, and civil war, are about to prepare new calamities. In short, every thing that we see happen induces us to

consider as not far distant the end of these wretches, whose madness and atrocities have filled with horror and indignation all those who respect the principles of religion, morality, and humanity.

« The undersigned, therefore, submit to the enlightened judgment and wisdom of your High Mightinesses, whether it would not be proper to employ all the means in your power to prohibit from entering your dominions in Europe, or your colonies, all those members of the assembly styling itself the National Convention, or of the pretended Executive Council who were directly or indirectly concerned in the said crime; and if they should be discovered and arrested, to deliver them up to justice, that they may serve as a lesson and example to mankind. ’

« To acquaint His Majesty of the sense of this house, that the said minister, in making this declaration, has departed from the principles upon which this house was induced to concur in the measures necessary for the support of the war, in which the British nation is at present unfortunately engaged; and has announced an intention, on his part, inconsistent with the repeated assurances given by His Majesty, that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of France; and for which declaration this house



cannot easily be brought to believe that the said minister derived any authority from His Majesty's instructions.

« Humbly to beseech His Majesty, that so much of the said memorial, as contains the declaration above recited, may be publicly disavowed by His Majesty, as containing matter inconsistent with the wisdom and humanity which at all times have distinguished the British nation; and derogatory to the dignity of the crown of this realm, by avowing an intention to interpose in the internal affairs of France, which His Majesty has, in so many declarations, disclaimed; and mingling purposes of vengeance with those objects of defence and security to ourselves and our allies, which His Majesty's ministers have so often declared to be the sole object of the present war.

« To represent to His Majesty, that this house has already expressed its sense of the acts spoken of in the above declaration; but that as neither this, nor any other foreign state, can possess any cognizance or jurisdiction respecting them, the only tendency of menaces against their perpetrators is, to compel this country either unjustifiably to carry on war for the subversion of the present government of France; or disgracefully to seek peace, by an ignominious negocia-

tion with the very government whom we have thus insulted and stigmatised in our public acts.

« That these threats must tend to give to the hostilities with which Europe is now afflicted, a peculiar barbarism and ferocity, by provoking and reviving a system of retaliation and bloodshed; which experience of its destructive tendency, honour, humanity, and religion, have combined to banish from the practice of civilised war.

« And finally, to represent to His Majesty how deeply the reputation of His Majesty's counsels is interested in disclaiming these unjustifiable, and, we trust, unauthorised denunciations of vengeance, so destructive of all respect for the consistency, and of all confidence in the sincerity of the public acts of his ministers; and so manifestly tending at once to render the principle of the war unjust, the conduct of hostilities barbarous, and the attainment of honorable peace hopeless. »

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## ON MR GREY'S MOTION

### FOR A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

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MAY 7, 1793.

Mr SHERIDAN said, that if the right honorable gentleman ( Mr Pitt ), who had just sat down, thought it necessary to commence his speech with an apology to the house for troubling them at that late hour, surely, then, it might be natural that he should also make an apology for introducing himself in the present stage of the debate. He was sure that the house, in any other circumstances than the present, might expect that apology; but on the present occasion he should not make an apology, for he would not pay the house so ill a compliment as to insinuate that the members of it were not ready to do their duty, which was to hear impartially all that could be said on either side of any question that came before them. The house had

already heard, with patience and with attention, much observation on both sides; it was to their honor they had done so. He felt difficulties often when he had occasion to trouble the house; but upon this occasion he could not help thinking that he stood upon very advantageous ground. He knew the advantage which the right honorable gentleman had in that house, and that for many reasons, he was more likely to be attended to than those who were to oppose him; few, if any, were heard within the walls of that house so attentively as that right honorable gentleman. But the task which devolved upon the person who had now the honor to address the house was great indeed. He knew that he and others of the same sentiments upon this subject had to speak freely bold unwelcome truths, and such as would not be heard with pleasure; yet so deeply was he impressed with a sense of his duty, that, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, he should not shrink from the task, but would do all in his power to perform it, even in the present situation of the house. He could not be discouraged, although he knew the effect of the burgrave tenures, of which the petition complained. The petition stated, and he would repeat to that house, that many of the members could only properly be addressed as

the representatives of a particular person, and not the people of England. This he and those with whom he acted ought to say to a great number of that house; — men who were either sent there by the express interference of the crown, or by individuals, at the will of the executive government. They ought to say so! to be able to render an account to the public, whose agent and attorneys they were, in order to satisfy that public that they had not neglected their duty. They were not in any case to be discouraged from the discharge of their duty; for though they knew their numbers to be small, they yet were conscious their cause was good. The speech of the right honorable gentleman was an extraordinary effort of his great, splendid talents, — his noble and vigorous mind. He applied all his powers to this subject: he appealed with his utmost skill to the pride and the passions of the assembly. The right honorable gentleman was aware that he was addressing his auditors upon a subject that required all his art, and therefore it was that all the art he was master of was used. It was a topic very worthy of the highest art; — that of convincing a great number of men that his conduct at this moment was not inconsistent, although perfectly different from his former professions.

He thought, however, that the right honorable gentleman would have confined himself a little more to an explanation of the subject on which so much objection had been taken to his conduct; instead of this explanation, he had found out numberless auxiliary evasions. The right honorable gentleman now objected to his honorable friend's motion upon this subject: he objected to it, because it was not specific, or because it did not contain a specific plan; and yet it was a little whimsical that this sort of objection should arise from that right honorable gentleman, who, himself, had made precisely the same proposition. But the right honorable gentleman told the house that he was now convinced of the impropriety of that measure: convinced of the impropriety! What was it that convinced him? Was he afraid that the proposal for a committee to enquire into the truth of any allegation of the corruption of parliament, might be attended with success? What was he afraid of? Did he fear he should be obliged to carry a plan for a parliamentary reform? He hoped the right honorable gentleman had some reasons for this change of his mind, which were honorable to himself, although he had not divulged them. But the change of the right honorable gentleman's mind

upon this part of the subject was still more inapplicable; for he said even now that he had not totally abandoned all thoughts of persisting in some measure for a parliamentary reform; and yet he seemed to say that he should never agree to any plan upon that subject that had not some specific remedy to a stated grievance. This was the more to be wondered at, when it was remembered, that when that right honorable gentleman submitted one of his motions for a parliamentary reform with a specific remedy, he was negatived by a large majority. But when he moved it merely as a plan for a committee of enquiry, such as the present one was, he was resisted only by a majority of twenty in a full house. Whatever the right honorable gentleman might think, or might wish, Mr Sheridan said, he, for his part, had no doubt but that a motion for a committee of enquiry was the most eligible plan that could be proposed upon this subject. This, he said, for many reasons; and one in particular, he could not help stating, which was the facility with which objections could be urged. Many persons, who were in their hearts enemies to the whole system of any parliamentary reform, might yet, for the sake of concealing it, say, if you had brought some other plan forward, I should have given it my

support; but I am convinced this plan is an improper one; and, therefore, there were always more enemies to a specific than a general plan. This petition, therefore, in his opinion, was a proper one. It stated certain grievances, which the petitioners were ready to prove at the bar of that house; and he knew not upon what principle of justice it was that the house could refuse entering into an enquiry. But there was said to be a great objection remaining to this petition from the nature of its allegation, as well as the prayer of it; for that it went to ask that which was against the principles of our constitution. — Gentlemen had laid great stress upon what they had stated in that respect; which was, that the principles of our constitution' and the whole of the system of our representation, was select; and that a system of general representation would destroy the whole of the spirit of the constitution altogether, by which representation was not matter of right. Gentlemen, in making this observation, were confounding the means with the principle — the principle of our constitution was representation; the means were selection and distribution. To illustrate this, Mr Sheridan read the preamble of an act of parliament, passed in the reign of King James I., in which it was stated, that the whole of the commons were



present when the bill passed their house. This was always the principle of the constitution of this country. Another thing was stated as an objection to the petition, namely, that it went to the extent of asking for an universal representation. Nothing was easier than to say so; but that was not the fact; — the petitioners did not claim the right of universal suffrage. But gentlemen urged, as another objection to the granting of the prayer of this petition, the danger which would attend it; and some went so far as to say, that if there were a full and complete representation of the people in that house, there would be an end of the other two branches of the legislature; for that the power of the commons would be so great, that the King and the lords would be voted useless. Such observations he thought highly dangerous; and he must say he did not think that sentiments more mischievous than these were ever uttered within the walls of that house; and he was sure that if the representation of the people was complete to-morrow, the people of this country had too much good sense to instruct their representatives to do any thing to affect the just prerogative of the King, or to diminish the privileges of the nobility. They would not suffer their agents to

do any thing of that nature , because they knew that if they did , their own power would be in danger. He would repeat it , that the good sense of the people of this country would have their own interest in view ; and that if the representation of the people in the house of commons was complete , the King would be firmer upon his throne than he was even at this moment. Another objection made by the right honorable gentleman was that which arose from the danger of transacting business , in this case , through the medium of delegates. How the right hon. gentleman had , on a sudden , formed such a dislike to delegates he did not know ; but it reminded him of what had happened on a former occasion , when this subject was under the direction of the right honorable gentleman himself ; they had been delegates , and he (Mr Sheridan) happened to know this , because he was one of the committee ; -- and so far was it from being thought at that time an impropriety , that the right honorable gentleman determined on carrying on the business upon this very principle ; and the Lord Mayor of London gave them the use of Guildhall to transact their business , and afforded them and the delegates all the encouragement he could to proceed upon the plan they had commenced ; but now the word delegate

seemed to be disagreeable to the right honorable gentleman. Indeed, Mr Sheridan observed, that there seemed to him to be a great deal of insincerity in the conduct of the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon this subject. He should have told those who now brought this matter forward, that they were not to expect his assistance: this would have been infinitely more manly than his present vacillation. He wished the Chancellor of the Exchequer would either tell the friends of parliamentary reform *when* he thought he should lend them his assistance, or declare that he never would. He had proved he was of opinion that a season of permanent prosperity was not the time. He had proved too that a time of war was not the time. Should they have the assistance of the right honorable gentleman after the war with France was over; or should we then be told, that the French being subdued, we should not suffer any alteration in our own constitution? He should either say at what time he should lend that assistance, or say that he was in the wrong when he brought the subject of parliamentary reform forward, and since that time he had seen his error, and therefore abandoned his principle. Mr Sheridan said he had rather hear that the right honorable gentleman had abrogated it altogether, than find

that he abandoned it only while he was minister, and that he should take it up again when he shall be out of power, because that would cast a shade upon the whole subject, and make the people of this country think there was nothing like honesty among those who professed attachment to the rights of the people; and the people might therefore despise all parties, and come to a determination of doing every thing for themselves. Mr Sheridan then observed, that the right honorable gentleman had intimated that the people were not desirous of a parliamentary reform, and that only a few individuals had expressed that wish. Upon this occasion he referred to the speech of an honorable gentleman (Mr Duncombe) early in this debate, and there it would be found that the honorable gentleman had said he believed in God that the prediction of the late Earl of Chatham would prove true, that a reform in parliament would be obtained before the end of the present century. It had been said that the measure proposed would be dangerous at the present moment, on account of the connection between France and this country. There could not be a more unfair argument than this, because nothing could be more different than the dispositions of the people of France and the people of this country. The one knew, and had

enjoyed for a long time, a certain portion of liberty; the other had but just ousted their despotism; and therefore to refuse to inquire into this subject on that account was ridiculous. The right honorable gentleman had said much on the vigor of our constitution: he never should attempt, he said, to deny but that the vigor of our constitution produced wealth; on the contrary he allowed that wealth rose out of the constitution; but if we persisted in not taking care to preserve that constitution by every means in our power, the very wealth it produced would be the means of its destruction; and the wealth which the constitution had been the means of acquiring was the best reason why a reform should take place. Mr Sheridan then took notice of the observation of a right honorable gentleman (Mr Windham), who had spoken in a former debate on this subject. That right honorable gentleman, in the course of his speech, had said, that he was opposing those who had a wish for a revolution in this country, and not a reform. He took some time to prove that they could not lay any stress upon the representation of this country as a principle. He saw that one petition contained more names than all the electors of this country who returned one half of the members of that house. This was certainly very

alarming to those who agreed with the logic of that right honorable gentleman, because he maintained that the more numerous the petitioners were, the greater was the chance of their being in the wrong; and yet again, after thus speaking against majorities, he proceeded to run down the minority. That right honorable gentleman had often been in a minority; but having lately had dealings chiefly with the majority, and consequently an excellent opportunity of shewing his judgment by dividing with the minority, he had a better opportunity of knowing their error. Having descanted upon this point for some time, he turned again to a serious view of the subject, and observed, that there were but three ways of judging of any point; the first was, by reason and truth; the second was, by majority of the opinion of those who think on the subject; the third was, force. If the first were sufficient, the other two would be unnecessary, and there would be no occasion for Government; because if man was to be governed by reason and truth, he would be perfect; and, being perfect, it would not be necessary that he should be governed; but as man was a frail being, it was necessary that he should have some government, and therefore there remained but the other two for his choice. Now of these two

he believed there was no difficulty in chusing; for as we all abhorred force, we came to the necessity of adopting the opinion of the majority of our fellow beings and therefore the right honorable gentleman, in declaring himself in a state of permanent insurrection against the majority of the people, was not quite correct. As to the general challenge of proving the abuse which subsists in our government, Mr Sheridan said, he had no delight in it, but as he must reply — some then of the abuses of which he complained, and of which a reform of parliament was the only remedy, were, that peers of the other house sent members to the house of commons by nomination; — that the crown sent members into that house by nomination too; — that some members of that house sent in members by their own nomination also — all these things made a farce of an election for the places for which these gentlemen were returned; — that men were created peers without having been of the least service to the public in any action of their lives, but merely on account of their parliamentary influence — the present minister had been the means of creating a hundred of them. He did not blame him, — the fault was in the system of government; — that cor-

ruption was the pivot on which the whole of our public government affairs turned ; — that the collection of taxes was under the management of wealthy men in parliamentary interest, the consequence of which was, that the collection of them was neglected ; — that, to make up the deficiency, excisemen must be added to the excise — this soured the temper of the people ; that neither in the church, the army, the navy, or any public office, was any appointment given, but what resulted of parliamentary influence ; and, consequently, corrupt majorities were at the will of the minister. He did not like to tell secrets of the prison house of the Treasury ; but in the present instance he was called upon. In short, whether the eye was directed to the church, the law, the army, or to parliament, it could only observe the seeds of inevitable decay and ruin in the British constitution. He next animadverted upon the American war, its origin, and issue : there he maintained that delusion was practised under the pretence of taxation, but in the end this country had paid dearly for the experiment of ministers. He alluded to the proselytism which had been ascribed to the views of the French nation, and of which they now seemed themselves to be thoroughly ashamed, since si-



milar doctrines had been carried into execution, by the Empress of Russia and the King of Prussia, with regard to the unhappy partitioned kingdom of Poland. Mr Sheridan concluded by stating, that the object of reform he and his colleagues had in view would be persevered in until it was effectually accomplished.

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## ON THE ADDRESS

ON THE KING'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING  
OF THE SESSION.

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Mr SHERIDAN began with observing, that the noble lord (Clifden) who had just sat down had divided a speech, more remarkable for its ability than its brevity, into two parts: the first, a detail of all the atrocities that had been committed during the whole course of the revolution in France; the second, a kind of posthumous arraignment of the offences of Brissot and his associates. As he did not perceive any noble or learned member inclined to rise on behalf of the accused, as he conceived the pleadings on the part of the prosecution to be closed, and as the Speaker was evidently not proceeding to sum up the evidence, he hoped he might be permitted to recal the attention of the house to the real object of that day's consideration. He admired the emphasis

of the noble lord, in reading his voluminous extracts from his various French documents; he admired too the ingenuity he had displayed, in his observations upon those extracts; but he could not help farther expressing his admiration, that the noble lord should have thought proper to have taken up so many hours in quoting passages in which not one word in ten was to the purpose; and often where they did apply to the question, they directly overset the principles they were brought forward to support.

The noble lord's purpose was to prove, that France had begun the war with Great Britain; this, he appeared to think, he had established the moment he had shewn that Brissot and others had promulgated, in print, a great many foolish and a great many wicked, general principles, mischievous to all established governments; and this, indeed, had been the only way in which any one had ever endeavoured to fix the act of hostile aggression upon France. No part of the King's speech, it seems, more fully met the noble lord's approbation, than that in which he had warned us to keep in sight the *real grounds and origin of the present war*. For his part, he knew not how to obey the call, for he knew not how to keep in sight that

which had never yet been in his view. The *real grounds* of the war had never yet been explained, either to that house or to the nation; but shifting clouds had veiled them from the public eye. The noble lord, however, appears to have understood His Majesty's allusion; he recollects the *real grounds* upon which the war was, in point of fact, undertaken; that is, he knows the means by which we had been brought into this war; we had been brought into it by repeated declamations on all that the frenzy, folly, and rashness of individuals in France, had either said or written, by which the passions of this country had been roused, or their fears excited, in order to second the views of those who had determined to plunge us into it at all events; therefore the noble lord, consistently enough, imagined that a repetition of the same means which induced us to commence hostilities, was the best method of persuading us to continue them. Hence, all this passionate declamation, hence this laborious farrago of extracts and anecdotes — of extracts from a book, which the noble lord allowed every one to have read; and anecdotes, of which he admitted, that no man who saw the newspapers could be ignorant. But what was the sum of all that he had told the house? that great and dreadful enor-

mities, at which the heart shuddered, and which not merely wounded every feeling of humanity, but disgusted and sickened the soul. All this was most true; but what did all this prove? What, but that eternal and unalterable truth which had always presented itself to his mind, in whatever way he had viewed the subject, namely, that a long-established despotism so far degraded and debased human nature, as to render its subjects, on the first recovery of their rights, unfit for the exercise of them; but never had he, or would he meet but with reprobation, that mode of argument which went, in fact, to establish, as an inference from this truth, that those who had been long slaves, ought therefore to remain so for ever! No; the lesson ought to be, he would again repeat, a tenfold horror of that despotic form of government which had so profaned and changed the nature of civilized man, and a still more jealous apprehension of any system tending to withhold the rights and liberties of our fellow creatures. Such a form of government might be considered as twice cursed; while it existed, it was solely responsible for the miseries and calamities of its subjects; and should a day of retribution come, and the tyranny be destroyed, it was equally to be charged with all the enormities which

the folly or frenzy of those who overturned it, should commit.

But the madness of the French people was not confined to their proceedings within their own country; we, and all the powers of Europe, had to dread it. True; but was this also to be accounted for? Wild and unsettled as their state of mind was necessarily upon the events which had thrown such power so suddenly into their hands, the surrounding states had goaded them into a still more savage state of madness, fury, and desperation. We had unsettled their reason, and then reviled their insanity; we drove them to the extremities that produced the evils we arraigned; we baited them like wild beasts, until at length we made them so. The conspiracy of Pilnitz, and the brutal threats of the royal abettors of that plot against the rights of nations and of men, had, in truth, to answer for all the additional misery, horrors, and iniquity which had since disgraced and incensed humanity. Such has been your conduct towards France, that you have created the passions which you persecute; you mark a nation to be cut off from the world; you covenant for their extermination; you swear to hunt them in their inmost recesses; you load them with every species of execration; and you now come

forth with whining declamations on the horror of their turning upon you with the fury which you inspired.

Sir, I should think it sufficient to answer thus generally to all the pathetic appeals to the passions, so constantly resorted to on this subject; but the noble lord, I am ready to admit, has, on the present occasion, endeavoured to ground more of argument, in one point of view, on the inflammatory passages and anecdotes he has quoted, than has been usual with those who have most practised this mode of treating the subject. I cannot, however, agree with the noble lord, that he has omitted any advantage to his case, for the sake of saving our time. In going over the pamphlet of Brissot, he tells us, rather whimsically, that he passes over this passage, and runs over that, when all the while he specifically details what he declares he will scarcely touch upon. In fact, he has passed over nothing but the question; and now mark the purpose of all this; observe the important conclusion for which, he says himself, he has dwelt so long on these facts, and I admit it to be a great and a serious one. Laying aside all question of aggression on the part of France, or of necessity on our part, to enter into the war — all this done, it seems, to shew the house

that the system now adopted by the government of that country is so abhorrent to the feelings of human nature; so contrary to the instinctive love of harmony and of social order implanted in the heart of man; so ruinous to external force, as well as to internal peace, prosperity, and happiness, *that it cannot stand*. This is the conclusion which the noble lord wishes to draw from all the facts and opinions that he has detailed. I close with him. I will admit his facts. I will admit that the system now prevalent in France is all that he has called it: and what ought to be our conclusion with respect to such a government? What, but that we ought to leave to the natural workings of the discords which it is calculated to engender, the task of its overthrow: that if it will not stand of itself, it is not necessary for us to attack it. Without disputing any of his premises, for the present, I will grant the noble lord, not only his principle, but the foundation upon which he builds it. I agree with him, that it is contrary to the eternal and unalterable laws of nature, and to the decrees of the maker of man and of nations, that a government founded on, and maintained by injustice, rapine, murder, and atheism, can have a fixed endurance, or a permanent success; that they are self-sown, in its own bosom, the



seeds of its own inevitable dissolution. But if so, whence is our mission to become the destroying angel to guide and hasten the anger of the Deity? — Who calls on us to offer with more than mortal arrogance, the alliance of a mortal arm to the Omnipotent? or to snatch the uplifted thunder from his hand, and point our erring aim at the devoted fabric which his original will has fated to fall and crumble in that ruin, which it is not in the means of man to accelerate or prevent? I accede to him the piety of his principle; let him accede to me the justice of my conclusion; or let him attend to experience, if not to reason, and must he not admit, that hitherto all the attempts of his apparently powerful, but certainly presumptuous crusade of vengeance, have appeared unfavored by fortune and by Providence; that they have hitherto had no other effect than to strengthen the powers — to whet the rapacity — to harden the heart — to inflame the fury, and to augment the crimes of that government, and that people, whom we have rashly sworn to subdue, to chastise, and to reform.

The noble lord appears to have been aware that the number of passages he has quoted from Brissot's book, and other publications, must be considered as having no other object than to

excite the mirth, or inflame the passions of the house, unless he had concluded by drawing some inference from them, applicable to the real subject in discussion; and this, at length, he has condescended to attempt by affirming, they all tended to prove that France not only must have been the aggressor, and England the attacked party, but that France is still the party desirous of continuing the war. But how has his quotation borne him out? That Brissot and Robespierre, previous to the experiment on Brabant, equally wished to propagate principles of republicanism in every country of Europe, I will grant to him, if he pleases, the latter endeavoured to effect it by force in Brabant, while the former wished to accomplish it by reason, and the example of prosperity which he hoped France would afford. But what does all this prove? When the noble lord, in the very same breath, is obliged to confess, that a short experience made both parties retract their opinion and practice; and so far from boasting of having provoked a war with England upon such principles, or for such purposes, the strongest reproach that either faction could throw upon the other was, in mutual accusation, of having been the cause of war with the only power in Europe with whom France was eager to continue at

peace. On this head, says the noble lord, Robespierre imputes it to Brissot — Brissot retorts it upon Robespierre; the Jacobins charge it upon the Girondists — the Girondists recriminate upon the Jacobins; the mountain thunders it upon the valley — and the valley re-echoes it back against the mountain; all facts, tending to contradict the assertion which the noble lord professed to establish by them, and making still plainer, what, indeed, the whole conduct of France had made sufficiently manifest at the time, namely, that there was no one party of whatever description in that country which was not earnest to avoid a rupture with this, nor any party which we may not at this moment reasonably believe to be inclined to put an end to hostilities.

The noble lord, however, thinks he has established a great deal, when he has proved, that all parties in the convention were, at the same time, fond of the system of fraternizing, as it is called, or of making proselytes to the general principles of republicanism. It may be so; but it would not have been uncandid in the noble lord to have dated the origin of this system, and to have marked the provocation to it; nor unfair to have acknowledged that even this principle also has been since completely abandoned by all

parties. If he refers to it, as a motive for our entertaining a just jealousy of them, he ought to admit their abandonment of it as a ground for our abandoning that jealousy. If their professing such a doctrine, was a provocation to hostility on our part, their retracting it is an opening to reconciliation. From the moment they solemnly disavowed all intentions or disposition to interfere in the governments of other nations, why should not we have renounced any intention of interfering in theirs? But instead of this, what has been our conduct? We continue to remind and reproach the French with their unjust and insolent conduct in respect to Brabant and Geneva; at the same time we adopt ourselves, and act upon the very principles they have abjured, or rather upon principles of still more extravagant insolence and injustice. Who did not reprobate the folly and profligacy of endeavouring to force upon the people of Brabant, French forms, French principles, and French creeds? — Of dragging them to the tree of liberty, and forcing them to dance round its roots, or to hang upon its branches! But what has been the conduct of Great Britain, so loud in the condemnation of such tyranny, under the mask of liberty? What has been her conduct to Genoa — to Switzerland

— to Tuscany? and, as far as she dared, to Denmark and to Sweden? For her insolence has been accompanied by its usual attendant, meanness. Here injustice has been without magnanimity. She wished to embark the world in the confederacy against France, the moment she thought proper to join it. The neutrality, of which she herself boasted but a month before, became instantly a heinous crime in any other state of Europe — and how has she proceeded? With those that are powerful, and whose assistance would have been important, she has only expostulated, and prevaricated: but in how little, as well as odious a light, has she appeared, when threatening and insulting those petty states, whose least obedience to her tyrannic mandates might bring great peril on themselves, and whose utmost effort could give but little aid to the allies? The noble lord has, with a just indignation, execrated the *cruel* and *perfidious* conduct of the fraternizing French to the Brabanters; but will he defend the fraternity of the *just* and *magnanimous* to the Genoese? — Have we not adopted the very words, as well as spirit of democratic tyranny? We say to the the timid, helpless Genoese, “you have no right to judge for yourselves; we know what is best for you; — you *must* and *shall* make a

common cause, with us; — you must adopt *our* principles, *our* views, *our* hatreds, and *our* perils; — you must tremble at dangers which do not threaten you, and resent injuries which have never been offered to you; — you must shed your republican blood in the cause of royalty; — in short, you must *fraternize* with us; — you must be our *friends*, our *allies*. If you hesitate, we will beat your walls about your ears — slaughter your people, and leave your city in smoking ruins, as an example to other petty states of the magnanimity of the British arms, and of the justice and moderation of British counsels. " Oh shame, Sir! let us never hear these fraternizing principles, formerly professed by France, quoted as a just provocation for attacking her, while we ourselves, with the most shameless inconsistency, are avowing them in every part of Europe, and practising them where we dare.

The noble lord, still pursuing his anecdotes and his argument, that France must have been the aggressor, and that the war was a war of necessity on our part, next retails to us the conduct of Citizen Genet, her emissary to the United States of America. Here again I give the noble lord his facts, and again I declare him to be equally unfortunate in his conclusion. I ad-

mit every thing as he states it, with respect to Citizen Genet. I agree in condemning the impolitic outrages he practised against the government of America; — I reprobate the indecent insults he offered to General Washington; — I disapprove of his erection of jacobin clubs in that country, his establishing consular tribunals for the judgment of prizes, etc., etc. But why has the noble lord overlooked the event of all these heinous and repeated provocations; *America remains neutral, prosperous, and at peace*; America, with a wisdom, prudence, and magnanimity, which we have disdained, thrives at this moment, in a state of envied tranquillity, and is hourly clearing the paths to unbounded opulence. America has monopolised the commerce, and the advantages which we have abandoned. Oh turn your eyes to her; view her situation, her happiness, her content! — observe her trade, and her manufactures adding daily to her general credit, to her private enjoyments, and to her public resources; her name and government rising above the nations of Europe with a simple, but commanding dignity; which wins at once the respect, the confidence, and the affection of the world. And is America degraded by this conduct, and by this condition! — Has Washington debased himself by

his temper and moderation? — Has he sunk his character, and made himself contemptible in the eyes of the high-spirited statesmen of Europe? Will the noble lord attempt to prove this; or will he abandon his instance and his argument? The conduct of the French, in sending such a missionary as Genet to America, is brought up by him as the strongest proof of the enmity of the French, to the peace and existing governments of all nations, and of the necessity of all nations uniting against them; and the behaviour of Genet himself, is stated as an outrage too gross for human patience to submit to: and yet, the *selfish* American senate, confiding in the good sense of their fellow citizens, conscious of never having betrayed their trust, and looking only to the interests of the people they represented, found no cause for war or quarrel in the novelty or madness of French principles; and *mean* Washington, felt no personal resentment at insults which did not provoke, because they could not degrade him.

Such has been the event of two nations, viewing the same circumstances in a different temper and with different sensations. Both had been equally insulted by this new presumptuous republic; in the bosoms of both attempts had been equally made to spread the doctrines of that



republic; both were equally interested in the preservation of the principles of civil order and regular government: yet, owing to the different counsels that directed these two nations, the Americans are, at this moment, the undismayed, undegraded, and unembarrassed spectators of the savage broils of Europe; whilst we are engaged in a struggle, as we have been this day distinctly told by our ministers, not for our glory or prosperity, but for our actual existence as a nation.

The next part from Brissot's pamphlet, dwelt upon by the noble lord, as a farther proof that the French had always intended to make war against us, was, that the Minister Monge had promised, as early as October, to have thirty ships of the line at sea from Brest in April, and fifty in July; but this, it seems, was happily prevented by the vigorous measures of the British ministry; and if our ministers had not taken the steps they did, the noble lord tells us, by the bye, they would have deserved to have been whipped as school-boys, or hanged as traitors. And what were these vigorous exertions which these vigilant ministers made? Forsooth, they stopped two corn ships in the river Thames, destined for France; and this, it seems, totally defeated the equipment of these fifty ships of the line! But here let me ask the noble lord

how it came to pass, if our ministers had such intelligence as early as October, that no *naval preparations were commenced* on our part till the month of February? for this fact has been admitted by him in another part of his speech; and the lateness of our equipment has been pleaded by him with another view, forgetting that there cannot be a stronger charge brought against his friends, and that they do indeed deserve to be whipped as school-boys, or hanged as traitors, if, after receiving intelligence of the French preparations so early as October, they neglected, as in fact they did, all precautions on the part of this country, excepting the notable and powerful expedient of plundering two neutral sloops of a few sacks of French corn!

However, laying aside the merit or demerit of our minister, no proof to the noble lord's purpose arises out of this threat of the Minister Monge. The noble lord confesses himself, that no part of the promise was kept: it was, in fact, a natural gasconade of the French admiralty, at a time we were insulting them; and that the execution of such an equipment was not attempted, is much stronger evidence of their having intended to break with us, than their having made the boast, is of a contrary determination. But it is unfortunately the interest of the cause the

noble lord is supporting, to refer, on all occasions, to words, rather than to facts.

The noble lord, still pursuing his authority, Brissot, quotes that author's recommendation to the English of a pamphlet of Cordorcet's addressed to our parliamentary reformers; who encourages us it seems to proceed to disregard numbers, assuring us, (being well informed doubtless of our object) that "Revolutions must always be the work of the minority. The French revolution was accomplished by the minority!" Nay, according to Brissot, it was the work of no more than twenty men! Such is the exertion that arises from the confidence of those who look to spirit and energy alone for success, and not to numbers. If this be true, it certainly is a most ominous thing for the enemies of reform in England; for if it holds true of necessity, that the minority still prevails in national contests, it must be a consequence that the smaller the minority, the more certain must be the success. In what a dreadful situation then must the noble lord be, and all the alarmists! for never, surely, was the minority so small, so thin in number as the present. Conscious, however, that Mr Cordorcet was mistaken in our object, I am glad to find, that we are terrible in proportion as we are few; I rejoice, that the liberality of

secession, which has thinned our ranks, has only served to make us more formidable. The alarmists will hear this with new apprehensions; they will, no doubt, return to us, with a view to diminish our force, and encumber us with their alliance, in order to reduce us to insignificance. But what has the nonsense any French pamphleteer may have written, or the notions he may have formed of the views of parties in this country, to do with the question, or how can it be gravely urged, as a proof of the determination of the French people to attack us?

The noble lord having gone through this part of his detail, triumphantly asks, whether he has not established his point, and proved the *hostile mind* of France; and that the object of all her parties, was *with England*? To which I answer, that he has proved nothing like it, and that two-thirds of the instances he has adduced have a tendency to prove the contrary. But instead of diving for their purposes in the random words of their orators, in the more flighty controversies of their party writers, or even in the hasty and incoherent reports of their committees, let us look to acts and facts; let us examine fairly the *conduct* of Great Britain towards France, and of France towards Great Britain, from the 10th of August to the declaration of war.

— Here Mr Sheridan enumerated the various circumstances which shewed the growing inveteracy of Great Britain from the first of the revolution to the time of the King's death; the countenance given to the treaty of Pilnitz, the withdrawing of our minister from Paris, the seizure of French property in neutral vessels, the banishing of French subjects, the violation of the treaty of commerce, and finally, the dismissal of their ambassador; all which, he shewed, had been borne by the French, with a submission which nothing but their desire of peace with this country could have produced, amidst the fury and pride which actuated their conduct towards all the rest of Europe. They solicited, they expostulated; they pressed for explanation and negotiation; and even after their ambassador had been driven from this country, they sent a new negociator; nor did the sincerity of their professions for *peace with us* depend on words alone; for to preserve this object, they actually abstained from the invasion of Holland, when within their grasp, when their arms appeared irresistible, and success inevitable. Every fact spoke aloud that we forced France into the quarrel. Which party first declaimed "We are at war," is a matter of trivial and childish distinction; nor do I, in this place, mean to

argue that Great Britain was wrong in so preferring a state of open war against France, and joining in the general confederacy against her; nay, I will, for the present, grant that it was a war of sound sense, policy, and justice; but still it was a war of choice on the part of Great Britain; and from that responsibility, the minister never can, nor shall, disengage himself.

Embarked, however, as we are in the war, it must, no doubt, be a matter of astonishment to many gentlemen, to find the advocates of ministers so eternally and earnestly labouring in proof of France having been the aggressor, and of having chosen to make war on us. The prominent point for the present discussion seems rather, under the circumstances, to be, how we shall end the conflict, let who will have began it; or if peace cannot be had, how we shall prosecute the war with vigour and success. But the object of these gentlemen, in recurring to the other ground, is obvious. They will not hear of peace; *they* do not wish for it; and finding themselves feeble in argument, to shew that the country ought to be of their opinion, they endeavour to establish a belief, that it is France who does not wish for peace with us; and this they think they do establish, by proving, or rather, by asserting, that it was France

who provoked the war. If the war commenced in self-defence and necessity on our part, self-defence and necessity must continue it. They would evade the question, whether it is our interest to have peace, by arguing, that it is not in our power; from this delusion, it is of the utmost importance that the public mind should be rescued.

All the professed objects for which we went to war have been obtained; our ally, Holland, is safe; Brabant is recovered; the ideas of adding to the extent of their own country, or of interfering in the governments of others, but as measures of warfare and retaliation, have been distinctly and unequivocally disavowed by the present government of France; and notwithstanding all their lofty boasts, and insulting threats, which are, in truth, the mere retorts of passion, to our wild declamations against them, there is no question but that they would be ready to treat with us, or with any of the allied powers, to-morrow, simply upon the principle of *being left to the exercise of their own will within their own boundaries*. Let the experiment be made; if they prefer and persist in war, then I will grant, that the noble lord will have some reason to maintain, that their minds were always disposed to that measure, and that war could not have been avoided on our part.

But till then, I am astonished that the minister, who sits near the noble lord, does not feel it necessary to his own dignity to oppose himself this paltry argument of the act of aggression having come from them, instead of leaving that task to us, to whom comparatively, the fact is indifferent. When he hears this called a war of necessity and defence, I wonder he does not feel ashamed of the meanness which it spreads over the whole of his cause, and the contradiction it diffuses among the greater part of his arguments. Will he meet the matter fairly? Will he answer to this one question distinctly? If France had abstained from any act of aggression against Great Britain, and her ally, Holland, should we have remained inactive spectators of the last campaign, idle, apart, and listening to the fray, leaving the contest to Austria and Prussia, and whatever allies they could themselves have obtained? If he says this, mark the dilemma into which he brings himself, his supporters, and the nation. This war is called a war unlike all other wars that ever man was engaged in. It is a war, it seems, commenced on a different principle, and carried on for a different purpose from all other wars. It is a war in which the interests of individual notions is absorbed, in the wider consideration of the interest of mankind. It is a



war in which personal provocation is lost in the outrage offered generally to civilized man ; — it is a war for the preservation of the possessions, the morals, and the religion of the world ; — it is a war for the maintenance of human order, and the existence of human society. Does he then mean to say, that he would have sat still, that Great Britain would have sat still, with arms folded, and, reclining in luxurious ease on her commercial couch, have remained an unconcerned spectator of this mighty conflict, and left the cause of civil order, government, morality, and religion, and its God, to take care of itself? or to owe its preservation to the mercenary exertions of German and Hungarian barbarians, provided only that France had not implicated Great Britain by a special offence, and *forced* us into this cause of divine and universal interest by the petty motive of a personal provocation? He will not tell us so; or, if he does, to answer a momentary purpose, will he hold the same language to our allies? Will he speak thus to the Emperor? Will he speak thus to the King of Prussia? Will he tell them, that we are not volunteers in this cause? — that we have no merit in having entered into it? — that we are in confederacy with them, only to resent a separate insult offered to our-

selves; which redressed, our zeal in the cause, at least, if not our engagements to continue in the alliance, must cease? Or, if he would hold this language to those powers, will he repeat it to those lesser states whom we are hourly dragging into this perilous contest, upon the only plea by which such an act of tyrannical compulsion can be attempted to be palliated, namely, that a *personal ground of complaint* against the French is not necessary to their enmity; but that as the league against that people is the cause of human nature itself, every country where human feelings exist, has already received its provocation in the atrocities of this common enemy of human kind. But, why do I ask him whether he would hold this language to the Emperor, or the King of Prussia? The King of Prussia, sir, at this moment tells you, even with a menacing tone, that it is your own war; he has demanded from you a subsidy and a loan; you have endeavoured to evade his demand, by pleading the tenor of your treaty of defensive alliance with him, and that as the party attacked, you are entitled to the whole of his exertions. He denies that you are the party attacked, though he applauds the principles upon which you are the aggressor; and is there another power in Europe to whom government

will venture to refer the decision of this question? If what I now state is not the fact, let me see the minister stand up, and contradict me. If he cannot, let us no longer bear that a fallacy should be attempted to be imposed on the people of this country, which would be treated with scorn and indignation in every corner of Europe. From this hour, let him either abandon the narrow ground of this being a war of necessity, entered into for self-defence; or give up the lofty boast of its being a war of principle, undertaken for the cause of human nature.

Still, still, however, be the war a war of necessity or choice; of de defence, or of principle; peace must some time or other be looked to. True; but in the present state of France; first, it is contended, that no means of negotiation can be found: and, secondly, that even if you negociated and agreed, no security for the performance of the agreement is to be had. An honorable member behind the noble lord (Mr Hawkins Browne) has given it as his opinion, that we, who recommend peace, ought to point out the means by which ministers may commence and carry on a negotiation. With submission, I should rather have thought it a fitter proceeding, that those who embark a nation in war for a specific purpose, should

be called on to point out the probable means of obtaining the end proposed; but no such thing. Ask them, *what* their end is, or *how* it is to be obtained? the constant answer is, no matter; the war is a just war, and it is impossible to treat for peace; we know not even how to set about it; and, with this answer, we must be content to persevere in a pursuit, which all experience has proved to be ruinous, in order to attain an object which no man attempts to prove to be practicable. The noble lord, however, does not lay so much stress on the impossibility of our treating for peace under the present circumstances, as upon the improbability of such a peace being safe or permanent. What security can we have for the continuance of a peace made with such a government as that of France? The factions of to-day are supplanted by others to-morrow; the rulers of the hour pass in succession from the tribune to the scaffold; there is nothing permanent or stable in their system — Granted. And what then are you waiting for before you will treat? Is it simply that you will have some person on a throne in France? Some first magistrate, with the name of KING, be his power what it may, before you will enter into any negotiation? I suspect that this feeling is obstinately rooted in the minds of

some persons. It is not, however, avowed; on the contrary, our own proclamations declare, that though the re-establishment of monarchy in France would be a soothing and conciliatory circumstance, it is not an indispensable preliminary to the re-establishment of peace. What then is the desideratum? — A stable and responsible system of government of some sort or other, that would give a *reasonable expectation of duration and security to peace, when established.*

I ask, is any change which our arms may probably effect in France, likely to produce such a government? The *form* of it we are not to prescribe. Where are the *men* we hope to see come forward? We commenced with reprobating and reviling La Fayette, La Rochefoucault, and the whole party of reforming royalists. Brissot and the republicans of the 10th of August overthrew and destroyed that party. We may boast of having assisted Robespierre and Danton in the destruction of Brissot and those republicans. Robespierre and Danton now possess the lead. Are you waiting till such men as Hebert and Chaumette shall have destroyed Robespierre and Danton? Would such a change give you the stable responsible and trust-worthy government you desire; or do you see any class of men still under them which in the revolution of enormities gives you a

fairer promise of your object? No man will hold out such an expectation. Whence then can arise the sort of government with whom you *would* condescend to treat? I affirm from only one possible source; from a general reformation in the public mind of France, founded on a deep sense of their calamities, and a just abhorrence of their past crimes. Then will cease their bloody internal enmities; then will cease the selfish, factious contests of their leaders; then will cease their revolting system of plunder, rapine, and impiety; then, in other words, will be established, their republic on the immortal and unconquerable principles of wisdom and of justice, which, without diminishing the invincible enthusiasm which even now animates their military exertions, will supply those exertions with copious and unperishable resources; and then truly we shall have no objection to acknowledge them as a nation, and to treat with them. Admirable prudence! Consummate policy! Whilst the certain seeds of internal discord, weakness, and dissolution, are sown among them, and are checked in their rank growth only by the counteraction of stronger feelings against the foreign enemies that surround them; we will not stoop to treat, because we cannot have *security* for the future; but if fortunately our perseverance in

assailing them shall at length eradicate all that is vicious and ruinous in their internal system, strengthening, as at the same time it must, the energies and solidity of their government, then our pride will abate, respectful negotiation will follow, and a happy peace may be concluded — a happy peace, for the terms of which we must be left in future, for ever at their mercy! This I contend to be, if not the object, the result of waiting for that stable, responsible, and trustworthy government in France, which the noble lord demands; unless, as I said before, the operative, though not the avowed motive, for the war is simply to establish a monarchy in that country, or perish in the attempt.

Leaving the origin and object of the war, our attention is next called to the great progress that has been made by the allies since we entered into the confederacy! Our *success* has been such, it seems, that we ought to proceed, be the object what it may. First, the noble lord asks, with a triumphant air, whether France is not in a much worse condition than at the beginning of the campaign. Unquestionably she is: she has lost some hundreds of thousands of lives, and exhausted many millions of resource; and what is more, sir, all Europe is in a worse condition, for the same reason. But I demand an

answer to a question more to the purpose, and in truth the only question which belongs to the argument. I ask if there is any one man in this house, or out of it, who thinks *that the allies are nearer to the object they had in view, than they were at the beginning of the campaign?* Let this question be fairly and honestly answered before we madly goad this nation to new exertions, and load our fellow subjects with new burdens. I meet the noble lord in his review of the state of the allies and of France at the commencement of the campaign, and at the present hour; but I enter into that review with the object I have stated before my eyes, and not to strike a balance on little petty successes which conduce nothing to the main purpose.

Previous to the ending of the last session of parliament, my right honourable friend (Mr Fox) renewed by a motion in this house, his exhortation to government to treat for peace. We had then achieved all the avowed purposes for which we went to war, Holland was safe, — the opening of the Scheldt out of the question, — the enemy was driven out of Brabant, — we had succeeded in the West Indies, — Tobago was taken, — and Lord Hood had sailed to the Mediterranean, with a force, sufficient to ensure the superiority of the British flag in that quarter.



Yet all these advantages, now so vauntingly enumerated, were then held as trifles; they were treated comparatively as insignificant matters; and nothing but some important, decisive blow against the common enemy, which the power of the allies in the ensuing campaign was certain to effect, could make it prudent to think of peace. What has that campaign produced? The surrender of Conde, Valenciennes, and Queuoy; the repossession of Mayence, and the partial destruction of the marine at Toulon. Compare this with our boasts, our exertions, and expectations, with what has been gained to the cause of France. First, the very corner-stone on which the hope of the most sanguine rested, was not (for they had before their eyes the experience of the Duke of Brunswick's former campaign), the vigour and probable impression of the invading arms: but the zeal, the numbers, and the fury of the royal party in France, then roused to action by their monarch's recent execution, and encouraged by the indignation and horror which that event appeared universally to excite. Where now is that royal party? Where is the hope which pointed to their banners? They rose indeed, and every thing that courage, vengeance, and despair could dictate, they attempted. Long and fruitlessly, they looked to the allies for assis-

tance; at length the voice and the flag of Britain cheered their hearts, and roused their efforts; would for the honour of Britain, we could bury the event in silent shame, and in the graves of the poor mangled victims of their own delusion and our professions. If there yet exists an eagerness for a royal crusade in England, will the British arms ever insult against the coasts of Brittany or Provence, with the offer of their protection? If there yet remains the remnant of a royal party in France, will Toulon and Noirmoutier ever be forgotten? The great body of the French royalists is destroyed, annihilated, and with them the very strongest ground upon which we built our first expectation of success.

The next point most relied upon by the eager advocates for the war, was the state even of the republican parties in Paris. Two factions, equally anti-monarchical, but actuated by the most fell and deadly animosity towards each other, ruled, severed, and dispirited the French people. By the furious contests of the leaders of these parties, the attention of the nation was engrossed, their efforts were enfeebled, their exertions shackled, and their hopes dismayed. Observers in all parts looked for a speedy and open conflict between them; and it was confidently and reasonably expected, that the event

of that conflict would inevitably be ferocious and extensive civil war. *The expectation* was among the foremost of the *resources* of the allies. What has happened? To the astonishment of the world, one of these parties, apparently the most feeble, has not merely subdued, but extinguished the other; subdued them almost without an effort, and extinguished them without even an attempt made to avenge them; whilst the conquering party appear from that hour to have possessed not only more power, more energy, and more confidence, than any of their predecessors since the revolution, but even a vigour and fascination of influence and authority unparalleled in the history of mankind. This reliance, therefore, though reckoned on at the commencement of the campaign as a host of hope, is also gone.

Again, we were told, that the system of disgusting, cashiering, and destroying all the old-experienced officers, must create insubordination and mutiny in the army, and ultimately bring down the vengeance and indignation of the soldiers upon the convention, and establish a military tyranny. Here again has ordinary speculation been foiled. The most victorious and popular generals have been arrested at the head of their troops; a commissioner from the con-

vention tells the armed line, that it is his will : — and, incredible as it may appear, there scarcely has been a single instance, countless almost as the number of their troops is, and compulsory as is the mode by which many of those numbers are gained, there scarcely has been a single instance of a military revolt against any of their decrees. All argument, therefore, that armies must in their nature disdain the controul of such an assembly, must, however reluctantly, be given up, and to that fallacious expectation we can look no more.

But the means even of supporting these armies we were told, could not continue through half the campaign. Arms, ammunition, clothing, money, bread, all would speedily fail. The prediction unfortunately has failed in every particular. But if our negative resources, and our hopes of co-operation in France have all disappointed us, I presume we shall find a full compensation in the increased strength and spirit of the grand alliance. Let us see. — What was the state of the allies when we entered into the confederacy? The force of Austria unbroken, though compelled to abandon Brabant; and the power of the veteran troops of Prussia, absolutely untried, though the seasons and disease had induced them to retire from Champagne. What

is their state now? Defeat has thinned their ranks, and disgrace has broken their spirit. They have been driven across the Rhine by French recruits, like sheep before a lion's whelp; and that, not from the mishap of a single great action lost, but after a succession of bloody contests, of unprecedented fury and obstinacy. Where now is the scientific confidence with which we were taught to regard the efforts of discipline and experience, when opposed to an untrained multitude and unpractised generals? The jargon of professional pedantry is mute, and the plain sense of man is left to its own course. But have the efforts of our other allies made amends for the misfortunes of these two principals in the confederacy? Have the valour and activity of the Dutch by land and sea exceeded our expectations? Has the Portuguese squadron lessened the extent and lightened the expense of our naval exertions. Have the Indian States whom we have bribed or bullied into our cause, made any very sensible impression upon the common enemy? Has our great ally the Empress of Russia contributed hitherto any thing to the common cause except her praises and her prayers? Are all or any of them in better spirits to act, or fuller of resource to act effectually, than they were at the commencement of the last

campaign? But let me throw all these considerations aside, every one of which, however, would singly outweigh the whole of the advantages placed in the opposite scale as gained by the allies; and let me ask, is it nothing that the great and momentous experiment has been made, and that a single nation roused by a new and animating energy, and defending what they conceive to be their liberty, has proved itself to be a match for the enmity and the arms of the world? Is the pride which success in such a conflict has given to the individual heart of every man who has shared in it to be estimated as nothing? Are the triumphs and rewards which the politic prodigality of their government heaps on the meanest of their ranks who suffer or distinguish themselves in their battles, fruitless and of no effect? Or, finally, are we to hold as a matter of slight consideration, the daring and enthusiastic spirit, solicitous of danger and fearless of death, which gradually kindled by all these circumstances, has now spread with electrical rapidity among such a race of people, so placed, so provided, and so provoked? Be he who he may that has reflected on all these circumstances either singly or in the aggregate, and shall still say that the allies are at this moment nearer the attainment of their professed object than at the

commencement of the last campaign, I say that man's mind is either clouded by passion, corrupted by interest, or that his intellects were never properly framed.

The noble lord, however, though not inclined to over-rate the enemy, seems to have been aware that he might be driven to admit the magnitude of their exertions, and that it would be difficult to deny the efficacy of them. But that we may not be dispirited, he has a solution ready for all this; both their *exertions* and their *success* are *forced* and *unnatural*. Another honorable gentleman indeed has told us, that if we had had only the *real* resources, and the *real* spirit of France to contend with, we should have conquered them long ago. It may be so; but the worst of it is, they will not suffer us to prescribe to them the sort of spirit, and the kind of resources we should chuse to contend with. This may be very unhandsome; but there is no remedy for it. They have, it is true, a great force, says the noble lord, but it has not a *sound* foundation. They have a full public treasury, but their prosperity is *unsound*. The people obey the government, but the ground of their submission is *unsound*; in short, he takes great pains to prove to us, that they ought not in reason or nature to make the stand they have hitherto maintained;

and that they have no right to beat their enemies in the manner which they have. Their government, he undertakes to demonstrate, is calculated not to produce any such effects. It reminds me of the story of a tradesman, who had a very admirable time-piece made by a person who had never learned the business, and neither knew it mechanically, nor scientifically. A neighbouring clock-maker, exasperated at this intrusion of natural genius, took great pains to convince the owner that he ought to turn his clock out of doors. It was in vain that the man assured him, that it went and struck truly; that he wound it up like other clocks; and that it told him the hour of the day precisely. The artist replied, that all this might be very true, but that he could demonstrate that it had no right to go like other clocks, for it was not made upon *sound principles*. The contest ended in his cajoling the poor man to part with his time-piece, and to buy from him, at three times the cost, a clock that did not answer half as well. I wish the noble lord would attempt to make a similar impression upon the French, and could prevail upon *them* to listen to him. I wish he could convince them that this revolutionary movement of theirs, which, however unskilfully and unmethodically put together, appears so stran-



gely to answer their purpose, is an unworthy jumble of ignorance and chance; and that they would be much better off if they would take a regular constitution of his choosing. If he could effect this, I should think his rhetoric well employed, and our chance of succeeding against them infinitely increased, otherwise his arguments and demonstrations on the subject here, are the idlest waste of breath possible. Experience and facts contradict him, and we smart under them.

In corroboration of his general position, the noble lord next details to us the manner in which they have either neglected or oppressed their commerce. I have no doubt but that all he has stated on this subject is true, and that they have done it possibly upon system. I should not be surprised to hear that some distinguished senator in that country, with a mind at once heated and contracted by brooding over one topic of alarm, had started up in the convention, and exclaimed, "perish our commerce, live our constitution," — nor more should I be surprised to learn, that the mass of the people, bowing to his authority, or worked on by fictitious alarms and fabricated rumours of plots, seditions, and insurrections, should have improved upon this patriotic exhortation, and,

agreeing that their constitution was certainly to be preferred to their commerce, should have conceived that they could not thoroughly shew the fervour of their zeal for the former, so well as by an unnecessary sacrifice of the latter. Whether the hint of this notable axiom was taken from the expressions of any enlightened member of our own commercial senate, — or whether it was imported into this house from France, — is what I cannot take upon me to decide. The only result worth our consideration is, that however their neglect of commerce may have abridged them of the luxuries and even comforts of life, it has not hitherto curtailed them in the means of military preparation, or slackened the sinews of war.

The next proof of the *unsoundness* of their condition is to be looked for in the enormous taxes and contributions raised upon the people. The noble lord summed up his laborious statements upon this subject, by informing us that every man of four hundred a-year, is obliged to give up two hundred and twenty pounds of it to the public; in which case the noble lord, with great arithmetical accuracy assures us that he retains but a hundred and eighty for himself (the only conclusion throughout his speech in which I implicitly agree with him), and people

of greater incomes it seems, are called on to do the same. Now again I give the noble lord his facts, but again I accompany my assent with a plain question. *Do the people submit to make these sacrifices?* He has not attempted to dispute their universal acquiescence. What then do his facts prove? What, but that so devoted are the whole people of France to the cause which they have espoused; so determined are they to maintain the struggle in which they have engaged; so paramount and domineering is the enthusiastic spirit of liberty in their bosoms; so insignificant comparatively all other pursuits and considerations; and, finally, so bitter and active their animosity against the conspiring powers which surround them, that individual property has ceased to be regarded even by the possessor, but as subsidiary to the public cause; and the government which has demanded these unprecedented sacrifices, yet retains its power, and does not appear to have impaired its popularity.

This system of exaction is *tremendous*, says the noble lord; it is so, but to whom? to those who have to fight with such a people. He ought, however, in fairness, to have stated also, that these sacrifices and these exactions are to expire when peace has closed the struggle in which alone they originate, and the end is attained for.

which alone they are tolerated : till then , unquestionably , the whole country of France is regarded as one great fortress in a state of siege . To tell us how little respect to private property , commercial principle , or personal privilege is attended to in such a state , is to prattle childishly ; prove to us , that the iron hand of violence and necessity which has barred the course of justice , and beat down all the security of private right throughout that besieged land , does not at the same time assist the one great object which is dearest to the general heart , — successful resistance to the besiegers .

The noble lord , however , not content with the unfairness of overlooking all the circumstances which imperious necessity must inevitably impose upon a country circumstanced as France is , thinks it fair and candid to contrast the proceedings of their convention on the subject of supply and finance , with the proceedings of the British minister and of the British parliament ! *We* , it seems , assist commerce instead of oppressing it . *We* lend the credit of the public Exchequer to our private merchants : and for the means of carrying on the war , not even voluntary contributions are expected , unless it be in little female keepsakes for the army , of gloves , mittens , nightcaps and under waist-

coats. Certainly the contrast between the French means of supply and ours is obvious, and long may it continue so. But the noble lord pursues his triumph on this subject too far; not content with simply alluding to it, which one would have imagined would have answered all his purposes, he endeavours to impress it more forcibly on our minds, by making a regular speech for our Chancellor of the Exchequer, and exultingly demanding what we should say if his right honorable friend (Mr Pitt) were to come down, and propose to the British parliament such ways and means as the minister of finance in France is compelled to resort to? What should we think if he were to rise and propose, that all persons who had money or property in an unproductive state should lend it without interest to the public? If he were to propose, that all who had saved incomes from the bounty of the state should refund what they had received? What, finally, if all persons possessing fortunes of any size, were called upon to give up the whole during the war, or reserve to themselves only the means of subsistence, or at the utmost one hundred and eighty pounds a-year? Upon my word, sir, I agree with the noble lord, that if his right honorable friend was to come down to us

with any such proposition, he would not long retain his present situation. And with such a consequence inevitable, he need not remind us that there is no great danger of our Chancellor of the Exchequer making any such experiment, any more than of the most zealous supporters of the war in this country, vying in their contributions with the abettors of republicanism in that. I can more easily fancy another sort of speech for our prudent minister. I can more easily conceive him modestly comparing himself and his own measures with the character and conduct of his rival, and saying — « Do I demand of you, wealthy citizens, to lend your boards to government without interest? On the contrary, when I shall come to propose a loan, not a man of you to whom I shall not hold out at least a job in every part of the subscription, and an usurious profit upon every pound you devote to the necessities of your country. Do I demand of you, my fellow placemen and brother pensioners, that you should sacrifice any part of your stipends to the public exigency; on the contrary, am I not daily increasing your emoluments and your numbers in proportion as the country becomes unable to provide for you? Do I require of you, my latest and most zealous proselytes, of you who

have come over to me for the special purpose of supporting the war — a war on the success of which you solemnly protest that the salvation of Britain, and of civil society itself, depend. Do I require of you, that you should make a temporary sacrifice in the cause of human nature of the greater part of your private incomes? No, gentlemen, I scorn to take advantage of the eagerness of your zeal, and to prove that I think the sincerity of your zeal and attachment to me needs no such test, I will make your interest co-operate with your principle; I will quarter many of you on the public supply, instead of calling on you to contribute to it, and while their thoughts are absorbed in patriotic apprehensions for their country, I will dextrously force upon others the favorite objects of the vanity or ambition of their lives.\*

Sir, I perceive that the house feels that I have made a speech more in character for the right honorable gentleman, than the noble lord did; that I have supposed him simply to describe what he has been actually doing; but I am much mistaken, if they do not at the same time think it rather indiscreet in the noble lord to have reminded us of such circumstances. Good God, sir, that he should have thought it prudent to have forced this contrast upon

our attention; that he should triumphantly remind us of every thing that shame should have withheld, and caution would have buried in oblivion! Will those who stood forth with a parade of disinterested patriotism, and vaunted of the *sacrifices* they had made, and the *exposed situation* they had chosen, in order the better to oppose the friends of Brissot in England — will they thank the noble lord for reminding us how soon these lofty professions dwindled into little jobbing pursuits for followers and dependants, as unfit to fill the offices procured for them, as the offices themselves were unfit to be created? Will the train of newly titled alarmists, of supernumerary negociators, of pensioned paymasters, agents and commissaries, thank him for remarking to us how profitable their panic has been to themselves, and how expensive to their country? What a contrast, indeed, do we exhibit? What! in such an hour as this, at a moment pregnant with the national fate, when, pressing as the exigency may be, the hard task of squeezing the money from the pockets of an impoverished people, from the toil, the drudgery of the shivering poor, must make the most practised collector's heart ache while he tears it from them. Can it be, that people of high rank, and



professing high principles, that *they* or *their families* should seek to thrive on the spoils of misery, and fatten on the meals wrested from industrious poverty? Can it be, that this should be the case with the very persons who state the *unprecedented peril of the country* as the *sole* cause of their being found in the ministerial ranks? The constitution is in danger, religion is in danger, the very existence of the nation itself is endangered; all personal and party considerations ought to vanish; the war must be supported by every possible exertion, and by every possible sacrifice; the people must not murmur at their burdens, it is for their salvation, their all is at stake. The time is come, when all honest and disinterested men should rally round the throne as round a standard;—for what? ye honest and disinterested men, to receive for your own private emolument, a portion of those very taxes which they themselves wring from the people, on the pretence of saving them from the poverty and distress which you say the enemy would inflict, but which you take care no enemy shall be able to aggravate. Oh! shame! shame! is this a time for selfish intrigues, and the little dirty traffic for lucre and emolument? Does it suit the honour of a gentleman to ask at such a moment? Does it

become the honesty of a minister to grant? Is it intended to confirm the pernicious doctrine so industriously propagated by many, that all public men are impostors, and that every politician has his price? Or even where there is no principle in the bosom, why does not prudence hint to the mercenary and the vain, to abstain a while at least, and wait the fitting of the times? Improvident impatience! Nay, even from those who seem to have no direct object of office or profit, what is the language which their actions speak? The throne is in danger! we will support the throne; but let us share the smiles of royalty; the order of nobility, is in danger! I will fight for nobility says the viscount, but my zeal would be much greater if I were made an earl. Rouse all the marquis within me, exclaims the earl, and the peerage never turned forth a more undaunted champion in its cause than I shall prove. Stain my green riband blue, cries out the illustrious knight; and the fountain of honour will have a fast and faithful servant. What are the people to think of our sincerity? — What credit are they to give to our professions? — Is this system to be persevered in? Is there nothing that whispers to that right honorable gentleman that the crisis is too big, that the times are too gigantic to be ruled by the little hackneyed and

every-day means of ordinary corruption? — Or are we to believe, that he has within himself a conscious feeling that disqualifies him from rebuking the ill-timed selfishness of his new allies? Just previous, indeed, to the measure which bespoke the pre-determination of our government for war, he deigned himself to accept a large sinecure place; even *he* — who at the commencement of his political career, lamented that he had fallen on times too good, too uncorrupt, to mark with effect the contrast of his own political disinterestedness — took to himself, at the period I mention, a great sinecure office, swelled by an additional pension, and both for life; the circumstance has never been commented on in parliament, though perhaps there are those who do not exactly think his public service underpaid by the remuneration. But if the acceptance of such a boon, at such a time, is to be regarded by him as a pledge and contract that he is never in future to consider himself entitled to an unpurchased support on the subject of this war, or to resist the mercenary claims of any proselyte, which his arguments or his example may create — inauspicious, indeed, was the moment in which his own disinterestedness was surprised by the bounty of his sovereign, and far more la-

mentable to his country, the consequences of that gift, than advantageous to himself.

Can we too seriously reflect, that in the contest in which we are engaged, we have avowedly staked the being of the British empire? This *Bellum Internicinium*, as it was rashly named by those who advised, and into which I fear it has been more rashly converted by those who have conducted it, is to be prosecuted at every risk. If we fail—we fall:—so circumstanced, the hour *may* come in which we may be compelled to look for a leftier spirit, a firmer energy, and a more enthusiastic attachment to the frame and form of our constitution, than ever yet has been demanded by our government from the people governed. Let the minister take care, if such an hour *should* come, that we do not look in vain. Let him take care that the corruptions of the government shall not have lost it the public heart; that the example of selfishness in the few, has not extinguished public spirit in the many. Let him not be too confident that his informers, his associations, his threats, his proclamations, or prosecutions, have driven from their post, or silenced the observations of those who honestly and lawfully watch the conduct of the *king's servants* in their stations, and *their own servants* in this house, and who

hold a corrupt collusion between them to be in itself an overthrow of the constitution. If we would have the people ready with one will, should the trying necessity arise, to risk and to sacrifice every thing for the safety of the constitution, and the independence of their country, let the high example come from those in high situations, and let it be as manifest as the danger that no part of their subsistence has been wrung from them on a specious pretence, and applied in fact, to increase the wages of corruption, or swell the price of political apostasy.

But if neither public interest, nor political prudence, sway the mind of the right honorable gentleman, I wonder that a feeling of personal pride has not, in some measure, deterred him from the selection he has made of the late objects of his patronage, his favour, and his confidence. What a compliment has he paid to all his former connections and attachments! and in what a light has he held out their pretensions and abilities to the world! possessing opportunity and sagacity to discern and estimate the claims of worth and talents, he has long been in a situation to attach to him a numerous body of respectable friends, whose fortunate concurrence in his opinion has been both steady and uniform. Could he not find among them all

any persons fit for the many situations of trust and emolument which he has lately appointed to or created, or worthy the honours which he has recently advised his forgiving sovereign to bestow? No, it seems that *from this side of the house alone*, the country could be properly served, or the favours of the crown duly repaid!

(Mr Sheridan here recapitulated, and remarked on a number of favours, offices, and appointments, all bestowed on gentlemen lately in opposition; among these he was supposed to allude to Lord Loughborough, Lord Carlisle, Lord Porchester, Lord Hertford, Lord Malmsbury, Lord Yarmouth, Sir Peter Burrell, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr Sylvester Douglas, Mr Anstruther, Mr John Erskine, etc.)

Was there ever, let me ask, a greater triumph than the list, I have run through, presents to those who yet remain on this side of the house, and who yet feel for the original credit of the party which these gentlemen have quitted? Of that coalition party, which has been so long and so vehemently traduced, both for its principles and its origin? Can it be, that this execrable faction, which, in the year 1784, was accused by the very man who then was, and still is minister, by all his adherents, and, through their arts, even by the country at

large, of the most rooted malignity to the constitution of this kingdom of endeavouring to enslave the house of commons, to disgrace the house of lords, to make a cypher of the King, and to introduce a fourth estate, which was to throw the power and patronage of the whole Empire into their hands, and make their tyranny immortal — that this same party, who, at the time of the regency, were again accused, under the same authority, of being actuated by an insatiate love of office and emolument alone, and of basely preferring the views of their own selfish and rapacious ambition to every sentiment of loyalty, to the first privileges of the commons, and even to the internal peace of the country. — Can it be that this arraigned, proscribed, and reprobated party, so characterised and stigmatized by the right honorable gentleman and his followers, should have contained all the while within its ranks the only men, who, when the trying hour of proof arrived, were fit to maintain the vigour of the constitution, assert the honour of the peerage, and prop the pillars of the throne? O! if this be so, what a lesson ought it to be to those who listen to the venal libels and calumnies of a ministerial press! What a warning to their credulity in future, when they recollect that these very gentlemen,

to whom principally, it seems, the country is indebted for the detection of all the plots, conspiracies, and insurrections which so lately threatened the overthrow of the state, as well as for that salutary preventive against all future ills of the present war, that these very personages were not only never excepted in the outrageous libels which so long assailed the party to which they so lately belonged, but were many of them the marked and principal objects of their venom and malignity ! Trusting that such a lesson will arise from reflecting on this fact, I quit the subject; adding only, that I should much regret the being supposed to impute any sinister or improper motives to the conduct of any of these gentlemen, or by any means to deny that the emoluments and honours they have received, were other than the consequences of their conversion to superior wisdom and integrity of the present minister, and in no respect the allurements to that conversion; but still, sir, I must take the freedom to observe, that in order to have prevented a doubt, in these mistrustful times, arising in the public mind upon the subject, from the odd concurrence of circumstances, and considering the pressure and magnitude of the plea, on which alone they have justified their separation from former and long-



cherished connections, it would have been better both for their own credit, and as an example to the people, to have rendered it impossible even for malice to suggest any other inducement for the part they took, than a strong sense of public duty, and a clear and disinterested apprehension for the general safety.

His Majesty laments the burdens that are to be laid on his people, and yet ministers lavish in courting, nay purchasing, deserters by the most shameful prostitution of the national treasure; I take it for granted that they have been forced thus to look to the other side, because the nursery for statesmen formed by the Secretary of State opposite to them, has not yet reared a sufficient number of plants for the necessary consumption; I dare say, that though our Chiron is slow in his march, he will improve as he goes on; and perhaps this year we shall be called upon for an additional sum of money to turn the nursery into a hot-bed. It is said, that if we were desirous of making peace, we have not the means. With whom do we treat? I answer, with the men that have the power of the French government in their hands. I never will disdain to treat with those on whom I make war; and surely no wise nation ought to persevere in the idle disdain of a negocia-

tion with those that are a match for them in war. A right honorable gentleman opposite said, that what made him first thing of a negotiation with America, was his looking at General Washington's army ; he had looked at it on the right, on the left, on the centre, and according to his curious phrase, he could not accommodate himself any where. The same was surely true of France ; we had tried it on all sides ; on the South at Toulon, on the West by the Rhine, on the North by Flanders, on the East by our spying-glasses, at St Maloes, and we could nowhere be accommodated. But I see, notwithstanding our fatal experiment, we are doomed to go on, the fatal determination is taken, and there is no rational hope that the good sense and spirit of this house will reserve the decree.

Mr Sheridan proceeded to a review of the proceedings of the campaign, to shew that government had not displayed a single exertion becoming the dignity of the nation, or calculated either to maintain the splendour of our name and arms, or to accomplish the object of the war. There had been great misconduct on the part of those who had the power of directing our forces. No one vigorous exertion of prudence or wisdom had been made ; however,

fortune, in some respects, had been favorable to us. We fortunately escaped hostilities with America: the risk, however, of such an event, was hereafter to be enquired into. For what purpose, he asked, was a large fleet kept in the Mediterranean, after the capture of Toulon, while we wanted its assistance in other parts of the world — whilst a French frigate rode triumphant along the coast of America. And after the engagement between this and an English frigate, in which our gallant captain (Courtenay) lost his life, what must have been the feelings of the crew, to find that no vengeance has been taken for his death?

Mr Sheridan shewed that even in the points of our attack, particularly at Toulon, Dunkirk, etc. etc. we had seen nothing but incapacity and blunder in the execution, as well as disaster in the event. These things must be the subject of parliamentary investigation. It was not enough that our precipitate retreat from Dunkirk was hushed up, and compromised between the Master-General of the Ordnance and first Lord of the Admiralty, because one of them was brother to the minister. And with respect to the transactions of Toulon; without stopping to inquire whether the destruction of the ships was consistent with the laws of war, he would

demand by whose orders the constitution of 1789 was first offered to the French people, and by whose orders that offer was broken to them; and it must be a subject of inquiry how the noble Lord Hood, who had so freely taxed General O'Hara with not keeping his word, had himself broken his word to the nation, about the strength and resistance of the place. The execution of the plan for the destruction of the ships, he would prove, was mismanaged in all that depended on the part of Lord Hood; for at the Babel council of the combined armies, an offer was made to undertake the destruction of these ships, which appears to have been accepted; and yet such an inadequate force was given for the purpose, as to oblige Sir Sidney Smith to leave 15 ships of the line unconsumed. He reproached them also for the expedition of Earl Moira, which was talked of so long as to deliver over all the unhappy royalists on the coast to massacre. The expedition of Sir Charles Grey had been equally ruined by protraction; and with respect to the whole of our naval campaign, it was in vain to enter into the details; for no man could with truth assert, that we had any where presented a formidable aspect to the enemy. Of the conduct of the channel fleet he would not say one word; he was sure

that the noble admiral had exerted his utmost talents in the service, though they all knew the industrious pains that had been taken to throw unmerited reproach upon him. That our trade had not been protected, the fact of the channel being now, or very lately, at the mercy of a few French frigates, was a most glaring proof.

All these things, he thought it a duty he owed his constituents to inquire into, that it might appear what our objects were in pursuing the present war, and what were the objects of our allies. From some late transactions, it was very evident that our worthy allies had objects very different from what this country could possibly be supposed to have in view. He said, that he did not mean to propose any amendment; he should be inclined to support, however, any amendment that went to declare that this house ought to treat for a peace, whenever an opportunity for that purpose presented itself.

THE END.

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JUN 10 1964

